Commonwealth Games

Thomas summons up one last effort

Duncan Mackay
in Kuala Lumpur

IWAN THOMAS has travelled 20,000 miles in the past four weeks but it was the final 400 metres which proved to be the toughest here last week.

Defying jet lag, fatigue and a bad back the Welshman showed a spirit to make the land of his fathers swell with pride as he claimed his third major title within a month. No wonder his team-mates have dubbed him the Peerless Prince of Wales.

Thomas's victory in a Games-record 44.52sec was another heavy blow to his English rival Mark Richardson, whom he beat into third place in the European Championships in Budapest last month and earlier in the AAAs. Richardson had missed the World Cup in Johannesburg to concentrate on this race but now must be tempted to believe his Welsh rival and Great Britain team-mate is indestructible.

After Thomas had won the World Cup title in South Africa, he then spent 10 hours on an overnight flight to arrive in the Malaysian capital in the early hours of last Tuesday morning, a day before he had to race in two qualifying rounds. Even a bad back sustained in the second of those rounds failed to derail him. A Danish osteopath, Torben Hersborg, worked on him for five hours to get him race-fit.

Watching Thomas clock 44.61 a few hours after receiving the treatment, as he chatted with his team-mate Jamie Baulch down the home straight in the semi-final, it was hard to believe there had been a problem. But Thomas had been only hours from withdrawing.

"My back went and I could barely walk after the second round," he said. "I was in tears with the pain and I came close to knocking these Games on the head. But something finally clicked and I felt fine."

Thomas needed all his famed strength and endurance to triumph in the final. "When I came off that last bend my legs felt dead but everyone else's must have been worse," he said.

"I owe my strength to my coach Mike Smith. All winter he makes me run over the sand dunes at Merthyr Mawr and I curse him. He just tells me to sod off."

Thomas's is an extraordinary achievement. He was struggling to break 45sec in July, but his season started gathering momentum when he beat Michael Johnson in Oslo, when Richardson won the race. The Windsor runner finished the season with a 6-3 record over Thomas, yet has lost to him every time in the major races.

"Tonight again proves I'm a great championship runner," said Thomas. "The difference is I believe in myself."

Richardson finished second in 44.60 while Baulch's legs gave way and he was overtaken by Sri Lanka's Sugath Thilakaratne to grab the bronze in 44.64. "In a strange way I'm happy," said Richardson. "I'm not pleased I lost, but I feel I did myself justice, which I didn't do in Budapest."

The dark clouds hanging over Diane Modahl finally lifted last Saturday when she won a bronze medal in the 800 metres.

On a night when England won three golds, thanks to Judith Golding in the 200 metres, Dalton Grant in the high jump and Jo Wise in the long jump, it was Modahl's medal that shone the brightest.

In 1994 she was not even allowed to step on the Games track when she was sent home from Victoria after being accused, falsely, of failing a drugs test. But here she bounded on to the podium after finishing third behind the Mozambique pair, Maria Mutola and Tina Paulino.

It was just reward for running 1min 58.81sec, her fastest time since winning the Commonwealth title in Auckland in 1990, behind Mutola's Games record of 1:57.60.

Modahl's medal was the perfect sixth wedding anniversary present for her husband, Vicente, the man who has led the fight to clear her name and to get compensation from the British Athletic Federation.

Tony Jarrett stepped out of the shadow of Britain's 110 metres hurdles world record holder Colin Jackson, who had opted to compete in the Tokyo international meeting, to take the Commonwealth title by 0.01secs to win in 13.47 sec.

However, the judges needed a photograph to separate the Englishman from Trinidad's Steve Brown. "I know Colin wasn't here, but I've got the gold and that's a sweet feeling," said Jarrett. Another happy Englishman was Julian Golding who won gold in the 200 metres in a personal best 20.18 seconds, the third fastest time by a Briton.

On the last day of the Games, the most dramatic story occurred in the 50km walk. In the 30C heat New Zealand's Craig Barrett collapsed in sight of the finish line. Barrett got to his feet three times but when he again fell down his team summoned an ambulance. The title he seemed assured of just minutes before went to Govindaswamy Saravanan — the first gold medal Malaysia has ever won in the Games.



Fight to the finish . . . Iwan Thomas of Wales, right, holds off English rival Mark Richardson, left, with Sugath Thilakaratne, centre, third PHOTOGRAPH: [illegible]

Cryptic crossword by Mercury

Across

8, 9 Army bridge decoration (8,5)
10 A cold man's a paint (4)
11 In fear ran and staggered everywhere (3,3,4)
12 Promise to put a little money on the shelf (6)
14 Hidden by loose stones backward animals live here (8)
15,17 In a hurry ironed it for me, but not properly (7,3,4)
20 Knowing old man by the way he catches insects? (3,5)
22 A shoot on Black's farm in America (6)
23 At No. 500 woven cane gate (10)
24 Waves on reaching motorway junction (4)
25 Bird seen in one Gretna Green pet shop (5)
26 Sick and in love is somewhere in America (8)

Down

1, 21 Should be read by everyone getting round a landlord? (8,6)
2 Longs to speak of the dimensions (4)
3 Puzzle bachelor with unholy piffle! (6)
4 Caddy vacantly takes iron for wood (7)
5 Suggested plan for one car is revised (8)
6 To aim to get one with a group in it is a bloomer (10)
7 See spinning top in flight (6)
13 Seems to follow a man climbing, then vanishes (10)
16 Divorcee exercises with new diet, needing to hurry (8)
18 Garage worker takes chaps tea in (one cold) (8)
19 Raising it in foreign money is mad (7)
21 See 1
22 Sugar producer wants the foreign car (6)
24 Boy taking the midnight air (4)

Last week's solution

TWOULD PARTWORK
E N O E O H E
CLASSIER AVENGE
L T N P D A I
ARGUETHETOSS
T M S T U T
CHOP UPMARKET
O E I A P U R
DUODENAL SUEY
G F M A T D
THROWAWOBBLY
T P N T U N P
FOMENT INSEASON
U R R O E I S
STEADYON DILUTE

Golf Solheim Cup

Europe leaves it far too late

David Davies
at Muirfield Village

THE United States, with their customary efficiency, won the Solheim Cup for the fourth time in five editions here on Sunday. Needing only 3½ points from the 12 singles, they lost the first four but won all but one of the following six to clinch a 16-12 victory and emphasise once again the lack of strength in depth in the European team.

Dottie Pepper, inevitably, won the final day's first American point. Her bulging-eyed brand of golf, which on Saturday night had prompted a complaint from Laura Davies on behalf of the visitors, was too good for Trish Johnson, and Rosie Jones won out in the country against Catrin Nilsmark, 6 and 4.

Kelly Robbins birdied the 16th and 17th, with putts of 15 and 12 feet, against Christina Sorenstam to secure the holders' third point. Then Sherri Steinhauer, the Weetabix British Women's champion, hit a magnificent pitch to the long 15th, finishing only a foot away, to ensure that, at three up and three to play against Catriona Matthew, the necessary half-point to retain the Cup was obtained.

Steinhauer then hit a wonderful tee shot to eight feet at the short 16th and, although Matthew followed to five feet, when the American holed, the cup was won. Matters after that were incidental to the result, with matches played for personal pride. The final act came when Meg Mallon, on the back fringe of the 18th green in two, with Sophie Gustafson on the putting surface 25 feet away, mysteriously decided to concede the hole for a halved match, enabling the Europeans to "win" their only series of the week.

Europe's strategy for the singles had been dictated by their own poor play over the fourball and foursomes series, which had left them trailing 10½-5½. Needing to win nine matches on Sunday the European captain, Pia Nilsson, had to deploy her strength at the top of the order.

Davies was duly sent out first and proceeded to go round in an approximate 80 — and still beat Pat Hurst on the last hole. Immediately behind her the Europeans were gathering points. Helen Alfredsson was behind for only two early holes against Juli Inkster, winning 2 and 1, the same margin by which Annika Sorenstam beat Donna Andrews.

Europe's fourth point came from another Swede, Lotta Neumann, who beat Brandie Burton with a bogey at the last.

Pepper stopped the rot for the Americans, which meant she won all four of her matches and is 10-1 in win-loss terms over the last three Solheim engagements. "Playing for my country gives me goose bumps," she said.

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The Washington Post Le Monde

Death on the West Bank: Israeli police surround Palestinian paramedics trying vainly to save the life of an Jewish settler shot in his car in Hebron by suspected Islamist militants on Monday. Later, a Palestinian was beaten to death near Nablus in an apparent tit-for-tat killing by angry settlers PHOTO: NASSER SHIYOUKHI

ANC condemned for using torture

David Beresford
in Johannesburg

SOUTH Africa's main liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), has been savaged in the final report of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's truth commission, with unexpectedly heavy criticism for alleged gross human rights violations, including the use of torture and the killing of innocent civilians.

The commission is also expected to find Winnie Mandela guilty of gross violations of human rights, and says the ANC must take responsibility for her actions. It says the liberation organisation failed to act after investigating her activities.

Similarly critical findings are made against the second organisation within the liberation movement, the Pan-Africanist Congress, which the commission condemned for the deliberate targeting of civilians. It also finds the PAC committed gross violations of human rights against its own members as a result of internal faction fighting, which led in some cases to murder.

The findings against the ANC and PAC are contained in Section 30 notices which the truth commission is required to present to an accused party 15 days before a detrimental finding is published. The final report, due to be released later this week, was presented to President Nelson Mandela on Tuesday.

Details of the Section 30 notices were fed to the local media on Monday, leading to speculation that the leaks were an attempt to draw the sting from this week's report.

From the Section 30 notices it appears the truth commission's final report endorses the United Nations position that apartheid is a "crime against humanity" and finds that the liberation struggle was "legitimate". But it finds that the ANC's national executive committee, the national working committee and the revolutionary council as well as its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, were guilty of gross abuses.

It criticises the "blurring of the distinction between military and civilian targets" in ANC bomb and land-mine attacks, which led to the deaths of innocents, particularly black farm workers.

It is also critical of the killing of collaborators — such as state witnesses who had been forced to testify by torture or other pressure. The commission is quoted as having described this as "one of the most painful consequences of the apartheid policy".

The commission reportedly identifies 13 methods of torture used by the ANC in its exile camps, including regular beatings under the feet, naked floggings, and beatings while being smothered with the skin of a paw-paw [papaya].

Mrs Mandela, president of the ANC's Women's League, is the only member of the organisation named in the report. Although she is known to have been served with a Section 30 notice, the details of the findings against her have not been disclosed. She was accused, before the commission, of having ordered and participated in the beating, torture and murder of a number of young township activists.

It would appear that the truth commission has uncovered little new where the activities of the liberation movement are concerned. ANC bombings have been the source of much embarrassment for the guerrilla organisation. The killing of collaborators — many of them by mobs using the gruesome "necklace" method of burning alive — was damaging to the liberation movement because the ANC leadership was slow in condemning it.

The findings against the PAC also contain few surprises. Factionalism was so bad in the organisation — which, it is suspected, was infiltrated by the CIA as well as South African Intelligence — that one meeting of its national executive famously culminated in a knife-fight in lieu of "any other business".

Meanwhile there was no sign by Monday of the court proceedings that the former South African president, F W de Klerk, had threatened to bring against the truth commission to block damaging findings they have made against him. He has objected unsuccessfully to a Section 30 notice advising him that he was being named as an accessory after the fact in the bombing of the Johannesburg premises of the South African Council of Churches, as well as an office block housing the Congress of South African Trade Unions in the mid-1980s.

Maryland's charter of mistrust

COMMENT
Martin Woollacott

CONVENTION demands that we welcome the results of long, hard negotiations in which both sides bargain down to the wire, mediators work tirelessly, and the final reward is that modern miracle, a "breakthrough".

A sigh of relief, if only at the drying up of such dreary descriptives, is almost obligatory. But we have been learning in recent years that agreements can be just as bad as disagreements. So it may prove with last week's Wye summit between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This has produced a charter of mutual mistrust rather than a peace deal. Even if it could lead on, in time, to a final agreement on a Palestinian state, the destination to which Palestinians are being propelled looks even less attractive than it did before.

Binyamin Netanyahu denounced the Oslo agreement within days of its signing in 1993 as "an enormous lie". He was against the peace process when he was in opposition, and twisted it once he reached office. Since he became Israel's prime minister the basic problem has been that Netanyahu, who alone could deliver what was necessary for peace on the Israeli side, has not wished to do so. During more than a week of frenetic and sometimes histrionic negotiations in the United States, Netanyahu did not shift from his basic strategy, which is that the peace process as originally envisaged will not be carried through. There should be no illusions about the agreement reached in the Maryland hills, no talk of compromises and still less of breakthroughs. Bill Clinton and his secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, desperately need some foreign credits as the president strives to regain his authority. They are therefore inclined, as over Kosovo and Iraq, to define some very defective deals as successes for want of anything better.

The Israeli-Palestinian arrangement the Americans have brokered is a deal that is in a way designed to fail. The essence of the Israeli position has been to demand security guarantees so tight that they cannot be fulfilled. However hard he tries, Yasser Arafat cannot give Israel total security against every suicide bomber and every extremist group. Hamas has already said no deal in Washington will prevent it from taking armed action if it wishes to do so.

Sharon believes in a Palestinian state, but only one trussed and bound like a chicken

As violations almost inevitably occur, they will provide Netanyahu with built-in opportunities to denounce the Palestinians and suspend any territorial transfers or to take an even harder line in the negotiations over the final status of the Palestinian entity. He may not necessarily take advantage of them all, but a tight security pact gives him the chance to bed down even more firmly the principle of reciprocity that he has used to erode the Oslo agreement. Reciprocity, in Netanyahu's definition, means that what Oslo says or implies Israel should do can be evaded, watered down or indefinitely postponed if there is a bomb or a shooting.

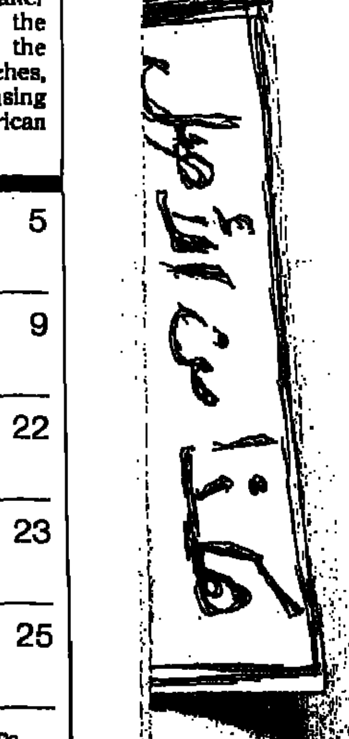
His use of the recent grenade attack on a bus queue in Beersheba, which even the Israeli security forces say seems to have been an isolated act by a man who was not necessarily acting under Hamas orders, was typical. In fact Hamas has not staged a major attack for nine months, for reasons of its own that are probably to do with giving Arafat enough rope to hang himself. Yet the Israeli leader "suspended" the negotiations because of this fairly minor attack. A day later he sent the Israeli delegation's luggage to the airport because, he claimed, he would not give way on security.

The need of ordinary Israelis for security is genuine. It has always been right to demand that the Palestinian Authority use its best efforts to prevent attacks. But that is not the same thing as providing a government that never believed in the Oslo agreement with an exit door it

continued on page 4

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 600	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80



Nato deal will ensure no peace in our time

THE agreement on Kosovo signed last month by the United States special envoy, Richard Holbrooke, and the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, is a worse sell-out than Munich because this was a cynical sell-out of a helpless people, disguised as peace. At Munich, Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier had at least reason to be scared of German military clout.

But Serbia is home to a tin-pot dictator who has been able to dupe the world's mightiest powers into abandoning the Kosovans, whom he had slaughtered in their thousands.

The deal calls for Mr Milosevic to withdraw his troops. But after the destruction of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Mr Milosevic's heavily armed police will be free to intimidate a traumatised population. Moreover, Kosovo is within the range of Serbian artillery, and if the ethnic Albanians show any sign of revolt he can easily send back his tanks within hours.

In fact, Mr Milosevic is likely to use the so-called international verifiers to prevent the restless Albanians from rising up against his repressive rule.

Nato has not only allowed Mr Milosevic to get away with the murder of thousands of Kosovans, it has also paved the way for him to legitimise his brutal rule.

Mr Holbrooke should know that the Yugoslav president has no intention of granting any form of autonomy to Kosovo. He triggered the crisis by taking away the region's autonomy. If he gives it back, he will lose his standing among his hardline allies. His own political future will be threatened.

Now with Nato's agreement, Mr Milosevic can cry foul if the Albanians try to break away. Under his repressive rule the KLA will inevitably resume its legitimate struggle for independence. War will return with Nato finding itself in the same bed as Mr Milosevic. Will they ever learn from history?

Mahmood Elahi,
Ottawa, Canada

LIKE most Western sources writing on the fighting in Yugoslavia, the Guardian Weekly is ignoring one very important principle: the West is only concerned with the right of peoples to self-determination. It is ignoring the sacrosanct principle of international law since 1945: the territorial integrity of states. There are 5,000 ethnic groups in the world. Should each constitute a state of its own? Why doesn't the West grant the Kurds in Turkey a state? Why doesn't the United Nations stop the crimes being committed against those people? Are Kurds less deserving than Albanians? Are the Basques less deserving, too?

There is a huge inconsistency here that has never been addressed. Civilians ought not to be the ones who pay the price for determined ideologues and their works.

Most wars in the modern world have resulted not in the unification of states, but in their dismantlement; not in the quest for empire building, but in Balkanisation. Secessionism is now the main threat to peace.

The battle in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo has little to do with the affirmation of an oppressed identity, and more to do with the desire no longer to live with others because it thought to be more advantageous to live apart.

The West has no right to believe that creating a new state in Yugoslavia will solve more problems than it will create.

Peter Ioannidis,
Georgetown, Ontario, Canada

GLENN FRANKEL (Human rights and global horrors, October 4) believes the difference between the atrocities of Bosnia and Nazi Germany was that the Nazis "bureaucratised mass murder". In Bosnia "much of the killing was done by people who knew their victims".

Yet a powerful and compelling BBC TV documentary series, The Nazis: A Warning From History, makes clear that some of the worst atrocities during the Nazi "expansionist" grab of eastern Europe were committed against neighbours within a community. Indeed, eternal moral vigilance is necessary over the proclivity of men and women everywhere to fear, rather than live with, apparent differences in others.

Mike Nicolaidi,
Feilding, New Zealand

Pinochet arrest a turning point

THE arrest of General Pinochet at the behest of two Spanish judges is a seminal event in the enforcement of international law against those responsible for some of the most heinous crimes against humanity.

It seems that neither the British government nor the judicial authorities were willing to consider overruling the diplomatic immunity of the notorious Chilean senator, even to the extent of asking him to justify the torture of a British doctor more than two decades ago for simply carrying out the terms of her Hippocratic oath.

Thankfully, both the French and Spanish authorities were more mindful of the egregious outrages perpetrated by the former Chilean dictator, showing yet again the UK government's relative lack of concern about the sufferings of other nationals.

Trade with Chile may be affected by this apparent breach of diplomatic etiquette, but it should not be beyond the verbal and literary dexterity of Labour's spin doctorate to turn it to the Government's advantage, by continuing to emphasise a hands-off approach by the executive towards the legal process necessary to bring this unsavoury character to book for the numerous lives taken by his henchmen.

Bill Jackson,
Mansfield, Notts

GENERAL Pinochet and the Chilean government seem to be stretching things in claiming diplomatic immunity for him purely because he was travelling on a diplomatic passport.

Under the Vienna Convention, immunities are enjoyed only by a "diplomatic agent" (and his family), defined as "the head of the mission or a member of the diplomatic staff of the mission". No one has suggested that Pinochet is the head or member of staff of any embassy or other diplomatic mission.

Surely, it would drive a coach and horses through international law if a government could give one of its citizens immunity from legal process overseas just by issuing him or her with a diplomatic passport — much as, for example, Slobodan Milosevic would no doubt welcome such a doctrine.

The issue by a number of governments of diplomatic passports to people who have no connection whatsoever with diplomacy is a blatant abuse of the system.

Brian Barder,
London

WHILE awaiting extradition General Pinochet can gainfully spend his time advising Tony Blair on welfare reform. New Labour has often quoted the Chilean social security system as a sensible way forward.

Rodney Hedley,
London

Flemish given poor treatment

STEPHEN BATES'S article (Living together, talking apart, October 8) annoyed me intensely. The Flemish do not "insist" on calling Lille "Reijsel". Not only that, the Flemish for Lille is in fact Rijsel. The city has a strong Flemish history, and it may be more accurate to say that the French insist in calling Rijsel "Lille". For that matter, don't the English "insist" on calling Antwerpen "Antwerp", Brugge "Bruges" and Lisboa "Lisbon"?

There are other offending digs at the Flemish in the article, less obvious though just as offensive. Flemish speakers are not racially different from whom? From the average Belgian maybe. But that doesn't make sense, since they represent more than 60 per cent of the population, and therefore the average Belgian is Flemish.

If the "one lot" referred to in the article refuse to speak the language of their compatriots, they do it for a good reason. The "other lot" have never bothered to learn "one lot's" language in the first place.

If it wasn't for his name, I'd have said that Mr Bates was a Walloon with a sizeable chip on his shoulder. The tone of this article typifies the way that the Flemish have been treated over the centuries. This treatment is a direct cause of the problems that Belgium experiences today.

Anthony Maye,
Brussels, Belgium

Briefly

I HOPE there are others who wince when they read the cynical phrase "ethnic cleansing". It is now used more and more, often without the inverted commas — they at least indicated the need to think about the meaning of the words: the politically planned massacre of human beings.

In Nazi Germany there were plenty of similarly harmless sounding phrases, such as "racial hygiene" and the "final solution" to the "Jewish Question".

By adopting the term ethnic cleansing we confirm the murderers' choice of vocabulary. There is nothing "cleansing" about what is going on in Bosnia and Kosovo, so let's stop calling it that.

Helen B Gradinger,
Munich, Germany

I WAS struck by the arrogance of New Zealand Maoris in Cathie Bell's article on the extinct moa bird (September 27). The project has been stalled over a question of ownership of moa DNA. The Ngai Tahu Maoris say that playing with genes to re-create extinct species would be a sensitive matter for Maoris, and "anything indigenous is regarded as *taonga* or treasured possessions".

The Maoris hunted moas to extinction before Europeans arrived in New Zealand. Go ahead with the project, I say. The Maoris are too late to claim ownership over species they wiped out.

Bernie Napp,
Wellington, New Zealand

THE two "defaced" photographs of Boris Yeltsin held by protesters in Moscow show the Russian leader with a Star of David painted on his forehead and a skull-cap on his head (October 18). Your journalist makes no comment on this extraordinary resurgence of anti-Semitism. Is Mr Yeltsin Jewish? Does "defaced" mean Jewish? Are they honouring him perhaps? I think I have missed something.

Alison Martin Katz,
Aire, Switzerland

I WAS disappointed by the inane quality of the reporting on the Conservative party conference (October 18). I am not defending what is clearly a party in extreme disarray, I want more information and less crowing. Rumours of the Conservatives' death are exaggerated, and I want to know more about how they are trying to reconstruct themselves.

(Dr) Sandy Simpson,
Auckland, New Zealand

TELL Simon Hoggart (October 18) to get off the Viagra soon or he'll do himself an injury.

Neil Cowie,
Urawa, Saitama, Japan

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Letters to the Editor and other editorial correspondence to: The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.
Fax: 44-171-242-0985 (UK: 0171-242 0985).
e-mail: weekly@guardian.co.uk
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Mugabe falls out of favour in Zimbabwe

Andrew Meldrum in Harare

OCTOBER is known as "suicide month" in Zimbabwe because [illegible] brings frustrations to breaking-point. This year it appears President Robert Mugabe succumbed by committing political suicide, alienating public opinion with arrogant domestic policies and his aggressive pursuit of the unpopular Congo war.

Nearly half the capital, Harare, has lacked running water for weeks. Piles of rubbish litter the city centre as unpaid municipal workers are on strike.

Piling into a taxi van is hot and sweaty. "No water, no pay, no Africa marshal," one passenger grumbles to rueful chuckles, as everyone picks up his reference: "Mugabe is not content to be our president for life, now he wants to be the marshal of Africa!"

"He is getting us in trouble in Congo," a woman says. "And it's our boys who are going to pay!"

Everyone agrees. Sixteen Zimbabwean soldiers were taken prisoner in eastern Congo last week. Their captors paraded them before the media. The Mugabe government is tight-lipped about casualties. The dead and wounded are no longer flown to Harare but to the remote Thornhill air force base.

Harare's water crisis has reached unexpected depths of the ridiculous. It has adequate water but not enough pumps to distribute it. When the mayor, Solomon Tawengwa, visited Hatcliffe — a township without water — housewives chased him with empty buckets. The evidence of gross mismanagement of the capital is overwhelming.

Water shortages, war, rampant inflation, devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar and 50 per cent unemployment have left Zimbabweans fed up. More than half Mr Mugabe's own cabinet, according to the Mirror newspaper, opposes the war.

Parliamentary elections are due in 2000. The virtual one-party state means no parties are well established save the ruling Zanu-PF. But those on the commuter van said they would vote for anybody but Zanu-PF's candidates.

Lejla Sehovic, winner of the Miss Croatia contest who was later stripped of her title — allegedly for being a Muslim — is comforted by Vanessa Redgrave in Zagreb. The title went to the runner-up, an ethnic Croat

Serbs move to beat deadline

Chris Bird in Dragobilje and Ian Black in London

SERBIAN armour rumbled back to barracks across Kosovo on Monday as the Yugoslav government moved to convince Nato it was meeting Tuesday's deadline for withdrawal from the province to avoid airstrikes.

As soldiers and police dismantled positions in the centre of the province, Nato kept up threats to bomb the forces of President Slobodan Milosevic if he does not keep to his pledge to pull back.

Britain's Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said Nato planes were still on the runways. "If Milosevic does not want them to take off, then it is up to him to comply," he warned. "He knows what he has got to do."

But as fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army took over abandoned positions it confirmed Serbian fears that their withdrawal under pressure would be quickly exploited by their enemy.

In Brussels Nato's military commander, General Wesley Clark, briefed Alliance ambassadors on his talks last weekend in Belgrade, where he insisted that Mr Milosevic remove more troops.

Diplomats said that Mr Milosevic had agreed to make withdrawals that would put him in substantial compliance with immediate UN demands.

Along the road between the regional capital, Pristina, and the western city of Pec, Serbian police were getting into buses ready to leave. Several posts had been abandoned.

A 2,000-strong group of unarmed "compliance verifiers" to be deployed by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has yet to arrive. In their absence, a few Western diplomatic monitors are present on the ground to "verify" the withdrawal.

One group took a cautious view of the troop movements. "They're a bunch of vehicles going from one place to another — I can't say any more than that," said one United States diplomat.

Despite the positive signs, Nato insisted it remained ready to use force once the deadline compliance ran out on Tuesday evening. The deadline has already been extended once since Mr Milosevic agreed on a peace plan on October 12 with US special envoy, Richard Holbrooke.

Nato has demanded that Serbian forces in Kosovo be withdrawn or returned to barracks so that hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees who fled the fighting can return safely to their homes.

Hundreds of people have died since February, when Mr Milosevic launched his crackdown on ethnic Albanian separatists in the province. About 90 per cent of Kosovo's 2 million residents are ethnic Albanian, and most favour independence.

In Washington, the White House spokesman, Joe Lockhart, said President Clinton was monitoring developments. "There appears to be a lot of movement" of Serbian troops, Mr Lockhart said, but added, "We haven't seen enough."

Meanwhile the Serbian government has used the threat of a Nato attack to justify a tough new media law, with curbs directed mainly at rebroadcasting material from foreign stations such as the BBC on local media outlets.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Tainted win for Iran's right

Geneive Abdo in Tehran

IRAN'S conservative clerics have claimed a substantial victory in the elections for the Assembly of Experts, in which only one leading moderate won a seat — but the results remain tainted by a biased selection process and doubts over the turnout.

Unofficial results reported on state television showed that candidates backed by the Association of Militant Clerics, the main rightwing faction, won 42 of the 86 seats. Twenty-one other winners are widely viewed as conservatives. About 23 seats went to independent or moderate candidates.

The Assembly of Experts is a clergy-based body that oversees actions by the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a conservative.

Before the election, a supervisory board removed almost all candidates associated with Iran's moderate president, Mohammed Khatami.

Given this sanitising of the candidate list, the turnout figure has become more important as a pointer to popular sentiment. It was estimated last weekend at 46 per cent of 39 million eligible voters. In the last Assembly of Experts election in 1990, 37 per cent voted.

"They need at least 50 per cent turnout to save face," said one senior Western diplomat, casting suspicion over official figures released so far.

Tours of Tehran polling stations found no more than half a dozen voters at any one time. At several centres police and election monitors outnumbered voters.

Barricades burn in Malaysia

John Aglionby in Jakarta

MALAYSIA'S opposition politicians and human rights activists intensified demands for the prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, to quit after demonstrators clashed with riot police in Kuala Lumpur last weekend.

"Mahathir must resign, or if he does not want to, he must hold elections immediately," said Syed Husin Ali, president of the opposition Malaysian People's party. "There is no justice in the system, and the person responsible is Dr Mahathir."

But Dr Mahathir, who is also home minister and in charge of the police, condemned the riot and said: "The groups calling themselves reformists seeking to uphold justice are the ones breaking the law."

The protests began in September after Dr Mahathir sacked and then arrested his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim.

Last weekend's violence erupted after about 2,000 demonstrators in a crowded city centre shopping area taunted dozens of riot police shadowing them. The police warned non-protesters to get off the streets and then opened fire with water cannon whose contents were laced with a chemical irritant.

There was chaos as protesters and shoppers fled, chased by plainclothes police in balaclavas. The demonstrators regrouped at a mosque in the heart of the city for evening prayers. But the police fired tear gas into the building.

The protesters responded, for the first time since the conflict began, by charging at the officers and throwing stones, bricks and petrol bombs at them. Others set fire to debris to form barricades. Clashes went on until late into Sunday night, by which time 241 people had been arrested.

The Week

RUSSIA'S President Boris Yeltsin cancelled a trip to Austria amid new fears for his health. His place was taken by the prime minister, Yevegeny Primakov, enhancing his image as de facto vice-president.

THE moderate Basque Nationalist party held on to the biggest share of seats — 21 out of 75 — in regional elections in the Basque Country following the ceasefire by ETA, whose political wing won three additional seats for a total of 14. Spain's ruling Popular party gained five seats, jumping to 16.

SEVENTEEN more people have been convicted of treason in Sierra Leone, where 24 soldiers have been executed for their part in a coup in 1997.

AN AUSTRIAN post office savings bank from which the Nazis looted thousands of savings account belonging to Holocaust victims said it would pay out the remaining balance of accounts to the holders' relatives.

BARNETT Slepian became the latest victim in the war against US doctors who perform abortions when a sniper's bullet killed him at home in Buffalo.

Washington Post, page 16

TWO Egyptian editors were jailed for a year with hard labour for libelling a pro-government politician.

HURRICANE Mitch, the most powerful hurricane in a decade to threaten Central America, with winds of 290km/h, was moving off the coast of Honduras.

PERU and Ecuador signed a peace treaty that ends a dispute over a piece of Andean jungle that has erupted into war three times in the past 60 years.

AZUAKI Okazaki, a former member of the Aum Shinrikyo cult, was sentenced to hang for his part in four murders, a Tokyo court ruled. It is the first death sentence in a series of trials of cult followers accused of crimes that include a nerve gas attack on Tokyo's underground.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 1 1998

Cambodians wait for king to feed them

John Gittings in Phnom Penh

THOUSANDS of desperate peasants camped outside the palace of Cambodia's King Sihanouk last Sunday as the country plunged further towards economic disaster. Whole villages waited hopefully in whatever shade they could find for a handout of royal rice.

"I've been on the road for two days from Svay Rieng" — close to the Vietnam border — said a village elder, his face blackened by the sun. "We need food for our lives; there's nothing in the ground."

Around him women with knotted headscarves fed their babies, shared out tiny portions of rice and sliced cucumber, or sat in silence. Many huddled beneath a large acacia tree, watched by police. Everyone else squatted in the dust.

The peasants began arriving last week, and some were promised rice by the king. As word spread, hundreds more headed for the capital, Phnom Penh, packed in ancient trucks.

"We have to eat wild roots in Kampong Tralach" — also in eastern Cambodia — one said. "But they are hard to cook and five people have already been poisoned."

One woman came from Svay Rieng carrying her sick child. "There are floods in my province and there is no rice . . . If no one helps, we're still going to be here." The rain has followed a long drought.

Last week the king attached a plaintive note to a newspaper report about the peasants and faxed it to the English-language Cambodia Daily. "I cannot possibly feed all Cambodia's starving, the number of which is growing day by day," he wrote. "Our government, the rich and the great, should also do something to help the starving."

But the rich and great have other matters on their minds. Political deadlock since the July elections has left Cambodia without effective government, while foreign investors and aid donors hold back.

The head of the ruling Cambodian People's party, Hun Sen, opened an international conference on land-mines in Phnom Penh.

Hun Sen's election victory is challenged by the two opposition parties, Funcinpec and the Sam Rainsy party. King Sihanouk is urging opposition leaders to return from overseas to take part in a political summit — over which he would preside — aimed at breaking the impasse. But officials from all three groups are said to be unable "even to agree about the shape of the table to sit round".

Independent Cambodian observers warn that unless a government is formed by the end of the year the economy will collapse.

Prices of basic foodstuffs have soared since the election. Rice costs 27 per cent more in Phnom Penh than it did a year ago. In the provinces it is even dearer. The government admits that Cambodia will have a shortfall this year of 250,000 tonnes.

The rice that farmers do manage to grow is often used to pay off debt, leaving them short. Drought has also damaged wet-season cultivation, including vegetables and cash crops.

The rural crisis has accelerated migration to urban areas, where there is increased competition for low-paid jobs. A survey by the Cambodian Development Review shows net earnings for four groups of "vulnerable workers" — cyclo drivers, porters, small traders and scavengers — have fallen between 30 and 50 per cent in a year.

Behind the statistics lies daily human misery, with more street children scrabbling for saleable rubbish. Hardship in the countryside will also increase the pressure for country girls to be sold into prostitution.

The street violence that followed the elections has ensured that tourism continues to decline.

Schröder gets all clear to take over

Denis Staunton in Berlin

GERMANY'S Social Democrats formally approved an historic coalition pact with the environmentalist Greens last Sunday, removing the last obstacle in the way of Gerhard Schröder becoming the country's first centre-left chancellor in 16 years. The Greens had approved the deal at a conference in Bonn the day before.

The two parties hammered out the accord following the election triumph in September over Helmut Kohl. The new 669-seat German parliament was expected to vote Mr Schröder into office on Tuesday.

Only one Social Democrat delegate out of more than 500 present voted against the coalition deal, which Mr Schröder promised would begin a new age in German politics.

"The new government stands for innovation and justice. We are going to give Germany a new beginning," he said.

The chancellor-elect made a brief visit to the informal summit of European Union leaders in the Austrian town of Portschach last Saturday. He said that Europe was waiting for Germany to take the lead in the fight against unemployment and in shaping an EU that is closer to citizens.

Germany's European policy is set to be dominated by the new finance minister, Oskar Lafontaine, who is also the Social Democrats' party chairman. The German media are predicting a power struggle between Mr Lafontaine and Mr Schröder. Business leaders complain that the new government's programme bears Mr Lafontaine's stamp. Both men have sought to play down their differences, insisting that they would co-operate for the next four years.

The new government promises a programme of economic, social and environmental renewal for Germany that will shift Europe's most powerful nation sharply to the left.

The citizenship law will be changed to allow millions of foreigners to become Germans, and the government will introduce the country's first anti-discrimination law. All nuclear power stations are to be shut down — gradually but irreversibly — and "green taxes" on petrol, electricity and gas will reward the environmentally responsible and punish polluters.

Comment, page 12

Turkey and Syria end Kurd dispute

Chris Morris in Ankara

TURKEY has claimed an important victory after forcing Syria to drop its support for Kurdish rebels. Tension had been mounting between the two countries for a month, with Turkey threatening to use military force.

Under a deal signed last week, Damascus is to cut off assistance to the Kurdish rebel group, the PKK, which had been using Syria to launch attacks across the border into Turkey.

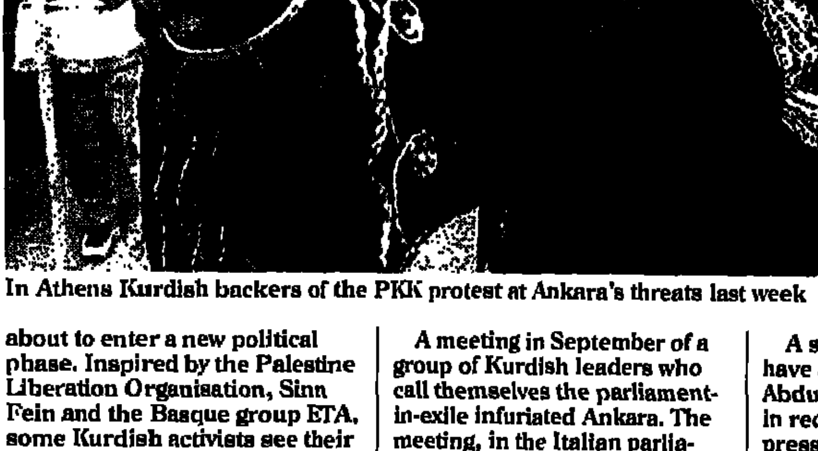
Although Ankara was delighted that its sabre-rattling seemed to have worked, a senior Turkish military official admitted it was suspicious of the Syrian president, Hafez al-Assad: he has been given limited time to live up to his promises.

Even if Syria does sever most of its links with the PKK it is only one battle in a wider war. Ankara has signalled that it will use more aggressive diplomacy in the future to combat the influence of Kurdish groups based abroad.

Turkey's great fear is that after 15 years and more than 30,000 deaths, the PKK's battle may be about to enter a new political phase. Inspired by the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Sinn Fein and the Basque group ETA, some Kurdish activists see their future as a political movement with a more moderate international image.

A meeting in September of a group of Kurdish leaders who call themselves the parliament-in-exile infuriated Ankara. The meeting, in the Italian parliament in Rome, prompted Turkey to withdraw its ambassador.

A series of MPs from Europe have also met the PKK leader, Abdullah Ocalan, in Damascus in recent months. It was largely pressure from these meetings that prompted the PKK to declare a ceasefire in September, which Turkey ignored.



In Athens Kurdish backers of the PKK protest at Ankara's threats last week PHOTOGRAPH: LEFTERIS PITARAKIS

Charter of mistrust

Continued from page 1

can use whenever it wishes to do so.

Netanyahu's dramatics underline another aspect of the Wye summit. The Israeli leader has always used such talks as a means of negotiating with his own right wing. The extraordinary effort that almost won the release of the Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard as a sweetener to an agreement already deeply favourable to the Israelis was part of this playing to the far-right gallery. The length of the negotiations, the suspension, the luggage ploy, and above all the fact that he had preceded the talks by appointing Ariel Sharon as his main man in dealing with the Palestinians, mean that he has almost certainly outflanked his critics on the right. They see him as getting the best possible deal, not from the Palestinians, but from the Americans.

It is an indication of what an inappropriate measure we now use for these things that it is Netanyahu's difficulties with the extreme right that are seen as critical. Yet his success does lead to an important question. Netanyahu has got his built-in escape route, and he has got a deal which he can get past the far right. Might he then actually go on down the road to a Palestinian state?

The answer is that he might. Netanyahu is at bottom ideologically hostile to the whole concept of such a state, but he is also a tactical opportunist who could decide that a sufficiently feeble Palestinian entity might eventually be called a "state", without too much risk. The state that might emerge at the end of a process dominated by Netanyahu and Sharon would indeed be a woeful thing.

Sharon is a man who believes in a Palestinian state, but only one trussed and bound like a chicken. As defence minister, he planned the network of Israeli-controlled bypass roads linking Jewish settlements in the West Bank. These roads and the security zones running along the Jordan and the western frontier of West Bank would cut up any state into a series of cantons under Israeli surveillance. As foreign minister, Sharon will certainly demand, in the final status negotiations, that Israel retain these roads and zones, which will make a mockery of the territorial integrity of a Palestinian state.

The quality of life in these places would be set by continuing Israeli security demands. The reason the West Bank and Gaza already have some aspects of a police state is not just that Arafat is a flawed and capricious leader presiding over an inflated and divided security apparatus. Israeli security requirements reinforce these tendencies, and the little that Israel is ready to give a Palestinian state makes it all the more likely that sweeping police powers will continue to be needed.

Thus is "security" part of the continuing corruption of Palestinian society. The failure to make a true peace is equally corrupting for Israeli society. Israel is a far less hopeful place than it was only a few years ago. The polarisation within Israeli society, and in particular between the religious right and the secular centre and left, grows worse. The Labour party is in disarray and its leader, Ehud Barak, ineffective.

Direct elections to the premiership, which were supposed to liberate Israeli politics, have had the opposite effect. Netanyahu is the best politician in the country, but he has misused his talents in pursuit of negative aims. Netanyahu was the only member of Likud in January 1992 to vote in favour of the direct election of the prime minister, his instinct telling him that his telegenic charms would favour him in a presidential-style contest. The measure passed by one vote, and Netanyahu duly rose to lead Likud and, later, Israel. That day may turn out to have been more fateful than the one, 20 months later, in September 1993, when the Oslo agreement was signed.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 1 1998

Hidden trade in Albanian babies' organs

Helena Smith in Tirana

ALBANIAN prosecutors believe a grisly trade in babies has arisen amid the breakdown of order in Albania. They suspect that the organs of missing children are being sold for transplant and that other infants are being stolen for adoption abroad.

The country's attorney-general, Arben Rakipi, said last weekend: "What we are seeing is a step-by-step worsening of criminal life in Albania that began with contraband smuggling and has come to this. We could be talking about hundreds of stolen babies here, of doctors being involved in the trade and of a network that extends to Italy, Greece and Macedonia."

He said an inquiry had begun into allegations that a "horror clinic" specialising in human organs had been set up in Tirana. Local newspapers have reported that surgeons working with the Italian Mafia were "operating on babies and sending their organs to Italy". Albanians were shown a gruesome shopping list of body parts. The going price for a heart, according to the daily Republica, was $220,000. A lung cost $68,000, while kidneys were "negotiable".

The reports claimed that "highly skilled" Albanian surgeons had forged links with the underworld while training abroad. Their scalpels were now being used on babies, and had also been aimed at children aged between four and 12.

"I believe what the papers have written," Mr Rakipi said. "Journalists in Albania are the best investigators."

The inquiry is expected to move into high gear later this month when Alberto Maritati, vice-president of Italy's Procura Anti-Mafia, visits the former Stalinist state to discuss the prosecutor's findings.

In its short and violent life of democratic freedom Albania has known many demons. In the past two years alone, the majority of its people have lost life savings in pyramid investment schemes and seen their country brought to the brink of civil war under the law of the gun — while having to help thousands of refugees who have poured across the border from Kosovo.

But the baby scandal has shaken even this society. In interviews, human rights activists, political commentators and women's groups all insisted they believed the reports. Many said they had begun to ask themselves where children were disappearing to.

Unicef officials say hundreds of children, mostly from the poverty-stricken highlands, have vanished. There have been many cases of dead new-born babies being discovered on rubbish dumps in Tirana.

"Child abuse is widespread here," said Kozara Kati, head of Albania's Centre for Human Rights. "For years we have heard of children being snatched by gangs or sent by their parents to beg and prostitute themselves in Italy and Greece. Many have returned with inexplicable scars on their bodies. We are, it seems, finally putting the jigsaw puzzle together."

It is widely thought that most of the missing babies are stolen from mothers who are told they are stillborn, although poverty incites others to hand them to smugglers for a fee.

"We want to strengthen the way Albania handles its births and deaths," said the health minister, Leonard Solis. "But criminals are often stronger than the state. The babies scandal shows that nothing is sacred and everything is possible."

MEPs vote to keep high expenses

Stephen Bates in Brussels

MEMBERS of the European Parliament voted to keep the gravy train rolling last week as they voted down attempts to limit their travel expenses to the real cost of their journeys.

Of the British deputies, 12 Conservative and three Labour MEPs voted against reform. The result indicates that there is no chance of changing what is seen as a blatant scandal before next summer's European elections.

It means that the 626 MEPs will be able to continue claiming reimbursement of full air fares from their constituencies — regardless of actual expenditure — plus inconvenience payments amounting to as much as a third more to cover the cost of getting to their local airport and back.

Some senior British MEPs estimate that they can make up to $1,400 a month tax-free on travel to Brussels and Strasbourg.

An amendment calling for reimbursement only of actual costs was defeated by 244 votes to 214. A further vote, linking reform of expenses to the establishment of a common salary for all MEPs, which the Tories supported but some Labour MEPs opposed, was also lost.

The Parliament is under pressure from national leaders to put forward proposals for reform before a European Union summit in Vienna in December. Major pay reforms must be agreed by member states' governments.

At the summit of EU leaders in June, Tony Blair claimed that the expenses undermined the Parliament's credibility: "I hope it will be dealt with because it is important for the reputation of the European institutions that we have an open, fair and transparent way of remuneration."

MEPs voting against the reform of the expenses system were mainly from southern states, where opposition to reform has always been strongest.

MEPs are paid at the same rate as domestic parliamentarians. So the best paid members, the Italians, receive about five times as much as the Greeks. Senior members are pressing for an overhaul of the salary and expenses structure, which would result in all MEPs being paid the same.

Centre-left leaders whistle new tune

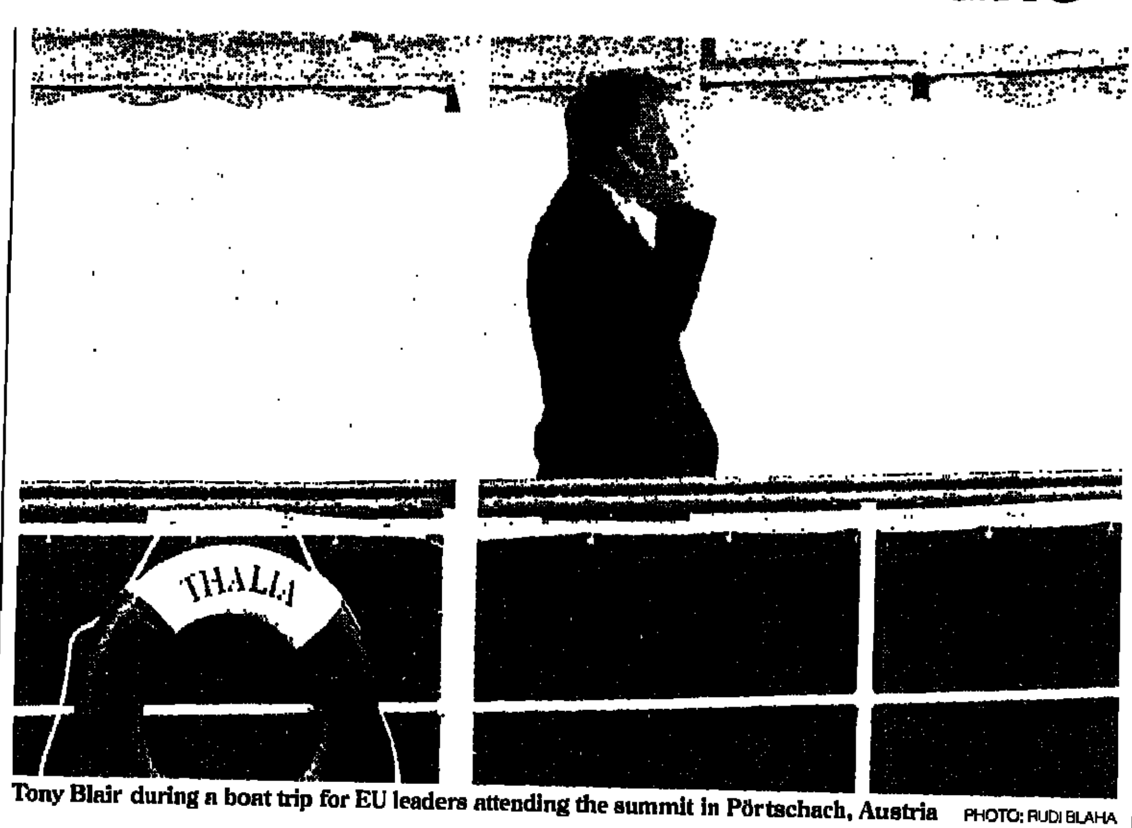
EUROPE THIS WEEK
Martin Walker

THEY decided to make Helmut Kohl an honorary citizen of Europe, but the European Union's 15 leaders, holding their first summit since the German elections in September transformed the political map, also breathed a sigh of relief that he had gone. The departure of the last of Europe's cold war titans has freed the new generation of European leaders to assert that the economy is just too important to be left to the central bankers.

After years of political and intellectual dominance by monetarists, last weekend's summit in Austria saw an important shift towards a renewed Keynesian faith in public investment and the state as a way to create jobs and economic growth. By agreeing to co-ordinate their economic and social policies towards growth rather than Kohl's cherished stability, they signalled that the era of financial discipline needed to launch a credible single currency was moving into a period when Euroland's financial stability might be safely exploited.

"Europe has to move towards more growth and jobs," said the French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, expressing the mood of resurgent Keynesian thinking now that Germany is led once again by Social Democrats. And at his first summit, Germany's chancellor-elect, Gerhard Schröder, echoed the theme, stressing that "scoring some common successes in the field of jobs is of particular importance to all our people".

But this was not Europe's "Red October". There was no lurch back to the corporatist and state intervention policies of the traditional left. The summit remained disciplined by the leaders' fear of upsetting the markets by appearing to meddle with the independence of the central banks. Even the Italian ex-communist Massimo D'Alema, the newest of the left-of-centre political leaders to join the summit, noted that this was not the time for a political battle with the stern financial orthodoxy of the European Central Bank. "What we have all done to give credibility to the euro should not be disturbed," D'Alema said.



Tony Blair during a boat trip for EU leaders attending the summit in Pörtschach, Austria PHOTO: RUDI BLAHA

The summit made a discreet call for lower interest rates, while shrinking from putting any public pressure on the independence of the central banks that set them. One of D'Alema's aides later commented that the summit leaders did not publicly challenge the cautious and orthodox Wim Duisenberg of the ECB to lower interest rates because "the message will get through. Wim Duisenberg knows that as the new left-of-centre governments start appointing our own new central bankers, their role on his top board means that the balance of power will shift inevitably in our favour."

But the agreement of the summit leaders to ask their finance ministers to draw up plans for co-ordinated economic and jobs policies for their next summit in Vienna in December would have been unlikely even a month ago, before Germany's electors voted out of office the orthodox Kohl and his equally orthodox finance minister, Theo Waigel.

"Our unemployment in Europe is a catastrophe and a scandal," said the summit host, the Austrian chancellor, Viktor Klima. "There must be a switch from policies of pure stability to a concerted drive for growth and for jobs. The excuse is no longer valid that that things are foundering on some conservative block or other."

The first fruit of this new thinking is expected to be a new wave of public investment in the proposed trans-European network of high-speed rail and road links drawn up by the EU transport commissioner, Neil Kinnock.

The second important result of Austria's lakeside summit was that Europe, for the first time, saw the evidence of Tony Blair's repeated claims to transform Britain's relations with its partners. His public commitment of Britain to a much deeper integration with Europe, by urging a common defence and foreign policy and backing the close co-ordination of economic and employment policies, was not delivered solely to fend off growing fears of Britain being marginalised by its failure to join the single currency.

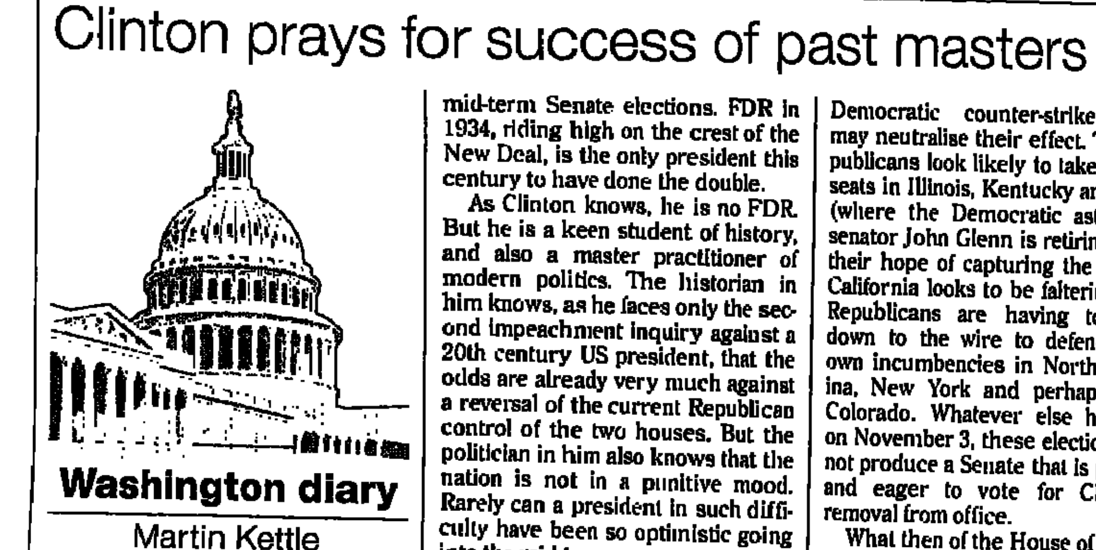
Blair's proposal to create a new European defence identity was long on broad principles and short on detailed proposals — in part because the various ideas on offer are the subject of heated dispute in Whitehall. His decision simply to list the options on offer rather than present a carefully worked-out plan is most unusual for Britain's government machine.

It follows a recent meeting between Blair and his civil service mandarins in which he accused them of having "a risk-averse culture". He said he wanted them to be more like the French, ready to offer ideas and seize the initiative in European debates and leave the detail for later discussion.

Blair's reward for displaying his Euro credentials was significant. There will be a host of separate planning efforts for economic policy co-ordination. The Austrian EU presidency will draw up a draft, and officials working for Schroder and Jospin are also said to be producing a joint paper to be approved at the next Franco-German summit on November 30.

But the main planning will be done by Ecofin, the institution where all 15 finance ministers meet. For deciding what may be the most important strategy for Europe's immediate future, the process will include Britain and the four other non-members of the euro-zone, and not force them out into the cold. As a well-placed Swedish official commented at the summit, tongue not altogether in cheek, "We are all Keynesians now, and all good Europeans, too".

Clinton prays for success of past masters



Washington diary
Martin Kettle

TO HEAR some of Bill Clinton's most passionate advocates talk, you would think that in next week's mid-term elections the voters of the United States are about to rise up and smite the president's accusers, sending a regiment of Clintonite Democrats back to Washington to put the country's ills to right.

Dream on. In almost every mid-term election of the 20th century, the president's party has lost more seats than it has gained. Only two presidents, Theodore Roosevelt in 1902 and Franklin Roosevelt in 1934, have seen their party gain seats in the House of Representatives in the mid-terms. Seven presidents have made party gains in the mid-term Senate elections. FDR in 1934, riding high on the crest of the New Deal, is the only president this century to have done the double.

As Clinton knows, he is no FDR. But he is a keen student of history, and also a master practitioner of modern politics. The historian in him knows, as he faces only the second impeachment inquiry against a 20th century US president, that the odds are already very much against a reversal of the current Republican control of the two houses. But the politician in him also knows that the nation is not in a punitive mood. Rarely can a president in such difficulty have been so optimistic going into the mid-terms.

The Republicans currently control the Senate by 55-45, and the House by 228-207. With only 34 Senate places up for election on November 3, only a fantasist would claim that the Democrats have any chance of recapturing the upper house. Only weeks ago, indeed, the political class was claiming that the Senate would slide even further towards the Republicans. There was routine talk of at least five Republican gains, enough to enable them to prevent the Democrats from filibustering Senate business — though still some way short of the two-thirds majority they would need to impeach Clinton.

Now, though, the talk is of very limited Republican gains — and of Democratic counter-strikes that may neutralise their effect. The Republicans look likely to take Senate seats in Illinois, Kentucky and Ohio (where the Democratic astronaut-senator John Glenn is retiring). But their hope of capturing the seat in California looks to be faltering, and Republicans are having to fight down to the wire to defend their own incumbencies in North Carolina, New York and perhaps even Colorado. Whatever else happens on November 3, these elections will not produce a Senate that is primed and eager to vote for Clinton's removal from office.

What then of the House of Representatives, where the Democrats scored some gains in 1996 and where, as usual, all 435 seats are up for grabs in the US's biennial general election? Is there a realistic chance that Clinton's party will emulate the two Roosevelts and make further inroads into the Republican majority?

It is a powerful comment on the roller-coaster nature of American electoral politics in 1998 that few non-partisan observers entirely dismiss the possibility of Democratic House gains. At the very start of the year, remember, when Monica Lewinsky was just another oversexed rich girl living in the Watergate building, Democrat strategists seriously believed that they could buck history on the back of a strong US economy, the first federal budget surplus for three decades, and Clinton's strong job approval ratings.

But then came the Lewinsky scandal, which plunged the Clinton presidency into a survival strategy from which it has not yet emerged. For most of this year, both parties have assumed that the scandal would hurt Democrats and bolster the Republicans. House Speaker Newt Gingrich has based his whole impeachment strategy on ensuring that this will be the case, and has forecast up to 40 Republican gains.

However, public opinion polls have now forced most strategists to revise such claims yet again. The publication of the Starr report has rebounded against the Republicans, the polls say, and there are many fewer queasy Democrats on Capitol Hill than most observers predicted at the start of September.

YET the central problem for both the parties this year is not the strength of public feeling but its absence. As ever, turnout next week is expected to be low, probably a record low, with as few as a third of Americans bothering to vote in many places.

As ever, most US elections will be decided locally, not nationally. In mid-term years this backyard focus is intensified by the fact that 36 of the 50 states will elect their governors, and in many states it is this contest to control state legislatures that predominates. In Florida, Maryland and Texas, congressional and Senate contests are playing second fiddle to the battle for the governor's mansion. And there is a strong case to be made that next week's single most important contest is that for governor of the nation's largest and richest state, California, where Democrat Gray Davis is leading his Republican opponent Dan Lungren as they enter the final straight.

In these final days the other great factor in American politics is also coming into its own. US elections are won and lost not just by issues and personalities but, above all, by money. Candidates who have spent the preceding months filling their war-chests at endless fund-raising events have done so in order to blitz the voters with expensive television advertising as the candidates sprint for the finish line. That moment is now, and this is where the Republicans' financial advantage will make itself felt.

Most of the signs in the 1998 elections tend to favour the Republicans. Historical precedent is on their side. So is a low turnout and high campaign spending. Those who have seats generally hold them. But this is also an unconventional year. In a clutch of highly competitive elections of every kind — House, Senate, state governors — the Democrats are running remarkably well. And it is these voters who will decide not just who wins on November 3, but also what happens to the Clinton presidency in the coming months.

Onion row provokes tears

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

IN A VAST shed where labourers stretch out to sleep on sacks of vegetables, Jagmohan Vij, an onion broker, puts away his lunchbox with a small smile. At the Azadpur market in north Delhi, variously described as north India's, Asia's or the world's largest wholesale vegetable market, 35kg sacks of onions were being auctioned for 1,650 rupees (about $40) last week.

When they eventually get to market, the onions will sell for upwards of 50 rupees a kilo — about eight times more than this time last year. "I've never seen anything like it," said Mr Vij, who has been trading onions for 50 years. He expects prices to continue to climb. But while he can afford to smile and pack onions in his lunchbox, for most Indians the lowliest of vegetables is now priced beyond their means.

The state of affairs is causing consternation to the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coalition government only weeks before state elections in Delhi, which the party also controls, and two other north Indian territories.

By any standard, Delhi has been an unending urban nightmare for the past six months: from May's heatwave when the temperature touched 49C to daily power failures lasting for hours at a stretch, a World Bank report rating the city's air the most foul on earth, the deaths of scores of people from tainted cooking oil, and economic recession following India's nuclear tests.

But it is onions that have got the government scared, and the political potency of the vegetable cannot be ignored. Onions are used in many Indian dishes, and they are even more essential for those too poor to cook who survive on *roti* (flat, round bread) and raw onion, known as the poor man's food.

Two decades ago the late Indira Gandhi engineered her return from political disgrace by waving garlands of onions at election rallies and shrieking about her opponents' failure to keep prices down.

So when two BJP leaders made the mistake of saying people should learn to live without onions, the party leadership was desperate to make amends. Last month it shunted aside the Delhi chief minister for a party high-flier, Sushma Swaraj, whose political appeal is grounded on her image as a model housewife.

Ms Swaraj has made onions her top priority. She promised an onion airlift, flying in hundreds of tonnes of the vegetable a day from Iran. The desperate measure comes after Dubai failed to deliver on previous orders, and neighbouring Pakistan, fearing its own onion crisis, declared a ban on exports.

The supplies are to be distributed by roving onion vans and at some 225 dairy outlets, where shoppers are entitled to a maximum 2kg, at 15 rupees a kilo.

Although the onion crop fell by 40 per cent this year because of late monsoon rains in western Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat, economists blame the onion crisis on the government's failure to manage the economy, or to anticipate the shortfall.

At Azadpur, Rajinder Sharma, secretary-general of the Potato and Onion Merchants' Association, said the government knew in advance of the crop failures but failed to limit onion exports to Russia and the Middle East. "We told the government in June that they should stop exporting onions," he said. "What did they do? Nothing."

Market forces . . . Most Indians can no longer afford onions

He is so angry about the price rises, which have knocked all but the wealthiest traders out of business, that he accuses the government of price manipulation on behalf of their traditional political supporters — big businessmen.

"If the government wanted the prices to come down during the last months, I told them time and time again: 'Import 2,000 tonnes of onions a day if you want the prices to be normalised'," Mr Sharma said.

"For the last two weeks, they say they are importing onions, but not a single onion has reached this market. We have not seen even a single onion. The government should not keep on lying for such a long time."



ILO combats child labour

Richard Galpin in Islamabad

PAKISTANI carpet manufacturers have promised to eliminate child labour from the industry in a treaty signed last week with the International Labour Organisation.

The agreement, which comes into effect in December, requires the manufacturers to remove children under 14 from their often cramped and dusty workplaces and send them to schools where they will receive free education.

Initially, the project will cover 30 villages and about 8,000 children, but the ILO is confident the scheme will be extended to the entire industry, most of which is in rural areas.

"Our objective is to remove all child labour from the carpet industry within five to 10 years," said Dani Appave, the ILO director in Pakistan. The organisation admits there will have to be strict monitoring to ensure compliance, including unannounced visits to work sites by independent monitors.

Similar programmes police Bangladesh's booming garment industry.

With funds of about $2.5 million over three years provided by the United States and the carpet manufacturers, there will be opportunities for adult members of families that lose one or more of their wage-earners to train for alternative work.

Carpet-weaving, one of Pakistan's oldest and largest cottage industries, is reported to employ at least 1 million people throughout the country, a substantial proportion of whom are children. It has an annual turnover of about $210 million.

Children are favoured by the loom-owners because their fingers are smaller and more flexible and so can weave more quickly.

Muslim girls bridge gap

Martin Kettle in Washington

GIRLS from the Muslim world — many of whom are often assumed in the West to be losing the right to education under patriarchal regimes — are making the fastest progress in overcoming the school gender gap.

A report from Population Action International in Washington last week revealed that the greatest strides towards equal education for girls and boys are visible in unexpected places, notably the Middle East.

The 10 countries that have made the most progress in narrowing educational inequality between the sexes in recent years include Oman, Lebanon, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt, it said. Others making significant progress include Nepal, Malawi, South Africa and Uruguay.

In Oman, for example, the number of girls attending secondary school rose from 17 per cent in 1985 to 64 per cent in 1995.

The annual study ranks countries by enrolment rates at both primary and secondary level.

In 18 countries, mostly in Latin America, girls now outnumber boys in secondary schools. But 51 countries still have serious gender gaps, with 75 million fewer girls than boys attending school in those countries.

Total school enrolment in those countries, mainly in the Arab world, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, is estimated at 600 million. The study estimates that the additional cost of educating as many girls as boys there would be nearly $6 billion.

The gender gap is particularly marked in primary education, in which 42 million fewer girls than boys are enrolled worldwide.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Ex-secret agent's only crime was to 'tell public the truth'

THE Government will have to wait until November 18 before it learns whether a French court is prepared to extradite David Shayler, a renegade former MI5 agent who fled the country after claiming that the security services were involved in a plot to assassinate the Libyan leader, Muammar Gadafy. He has been under arrest in Paris since August last year.

If he is returned to Britain, he will be charged with breaching the catch-all Official Secrets Act. But his lawyers, claiming that the extradition request was politically motivated, have argued that the act is in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. They claim that Mr Shayler did no more than speak out to reveal malpractice and inefficiency in MI5 and to show that "taxpayers' money had been used to kill innocent civilians".

His British lawyer, John Wadham, insisted that his client was "a whistle-blower who is being prosecuted for telling the truth; for releasing information that is in the public interest". Mr Shayler had alleged that, among other things, MI5 was paranoid about "reds under the bed" and that it had investigated politicians such as Peter Mandelson, Jack Straw and Harriet Harman, who have since become government ministers.

The claims resembled those made by Peter Wright, the author of Spycatcher, who succeeded in resisting bungled demands for his extradition from Australia. This time, however, Britain has been forced to concede that Mr Shayler's media disclosures "would not damage the work of the security service or national security", but that he should be charged with removing more than 20 highly classified documents from MI5 files.

The contents of those files, however, were never published, though copies of them were shown by Mr Shayler to journalists to convince them that he had worked for MI5. His lawyer, who is also a director of Liberty, the civil rights group, said that the Government was trying a "tactical ruse" only possible because the Official Secrets Act was so draconian.

IT WAS not a good week for the BBC, which found itself under attack from several quarters as its most senior executives were subjected to a withering assault from MPs and a strike by their own journalists and production staff.

Members of a Commons select committee criticised the corporation for spending £30 million a year on a 24-hour news service which nobody seemed to want, but forgoing its 60-year tradition of broadcasting Test cricket because it refused to bid an extra £6 million for the rights, which went to Channel 4.

Then came the audience figures, which showed that listeners to its flagship Radio 4 had hit an all-time low. Since a controversial revamp by its controller, James Boyle, its listenership had fallen by 500,000 to 7.7 million, its worst performance.

Production staff went on strike not only in protest against their 4 per cent pay offer, when senior executives are getting 9 per cent, but because they have been forced into new studios, using new technology which, they say, does not work.

A NEW investigation into the estate of Diana, Princess of Wales, suggests that her sons, the Princes William and Harry, may have to pay millions of pounds more in tax. If officials decide that her possessions were undervalued when they were examined last year, the princes could lose up to 20 per cent of their £13 million inheritance, on which they have already paid inheritance tax of £8.4 million.

Yet another book about Diana, written by Penny Junor, who is openly sympathetic to Prince Charles, claims that the princess had an affair with her detective, Barry Mannakee, before her husband formed an adulterous relationship with Camilla Parker Bowles. The prince and Ms Parker Bowles denied that they were behind either this revelation or another claim, that the princess issued telephone death threats to Ms Parker Bowles.

THE FORMER prime minister, Baroness Thatcher, grabbed the headlines twice in a week. First she proposed that single mothers with illegitimate children should be placed "in the hands of a very good religious organisation" rather than be given a flat and income by the state to raise their family alone.

Then she declared that the former Chilean dictator, General Pinochet, arrested in London pending extradition to Spain, should be released because he had helped to save the lives of British soldiers during the Falklands war. It was a typical Thatcherite outburst, to which nobody paid much attention, though some claimed that the lady was a secret admirer of the general, whose economic policies she had emulated. Comment, page 12

BEFORE his state visit to Britain this week, President Carlos Menem of Argentina said that he "deeply regretted" the Falklands conflict which had cost hundreds of British and Argentine lives.

"Argentina says sorry for the Falklands" screamed the tabloid Sun newspaper. "Nothing of the sort," responded Menem's diplomats. Argentina had not abandoned its claim to Las Malvinas, and regret should not be construed as apology.



Dark secrets of Russell killer

Audrey Gillan and Duncan Campbell

MICHAEL STONE, the man found guilty last week of the double murder of Lin Russell and her daughter Megan, and the attempted murder of her other daughter, Josie, had confessed to having fantasies about killing and torturing women and children.

His defence lawyer said that Stone, who has a string of previous convictions and suffers from a severe personality disorder, had asked to be admitted to psychiatric hospital in the weeks before the murder, but was refused a bed.

He has convictions for assaulting a man with a hammer, for stabbing a sleeping burglary victim with a kitchen knife and also for armed robbery.

The 38-year-old, from Gillingham in Kent, who has spent much of his life in prisons and institutions and had addictions to heroin, methadone and alcohol, was given three life sentences.

Stone closed his eyes and wept when he heard the 10-2 majority verdict of the eight woman and four man jury. He shook his head and cried: "It wasn't me, I never done it. It wasn't me, I haven't done it."

After the verdict, Stone's defence team announced it would be appealing. His barrister, William Clegg QC, had told the court that Stone had been "fitted up" by a "bunch of convicts", and that everyone wanted to see him guilty but that there was no real evidence against him.

The verdict came after 15 hours of deliberation following a three-week trial at Maidstone crown court. The police had always been aware that their evidence — mainly based on confessions alleged to have been made to convicted criminals — might not be strong enough.

Stone could, in fact, be seeking his freedom in the Court of Appeal as early as next spring after Barry Thompson, one of the three witnesses with criminal convictions, claimed that he had lied. The admission of perjury came barely a day after Stone had been jailed for life.


Michael Stone, convicted of the Russell murders

But Stone's solicitor, Derek Hayward, stressed that it was the evidence of another witness, Damien Daley, which had convicted Stone and that while Thompson's admission might help, his evidence had only been corroboration.

The Crown Prosecution Service has ordered an immediate investigation into Thompson's claim, made to the Mirror newspaper.

Thompson now says he lied when he said Stone had told him, when they were both in Elmley prison in Sheerness, Kent: "I made a mistake with her [Josie, who survived the attack]. I won't make the same mistake with you."

He told the Mirror that what Stone had actually said was: "You and me are going to fall out." He claimed he had thought his evidence was minimal and that Stone would not be convicted.

Lin, aged 45, and Megan Russell, six, were tied up and beaten to death on July 9 1996 as they made their way home to the village of Nonington in Kent. The family dog, Lucy, was also killed. Josie, then nine, was left for dead.

Josie made an extraordinary recovery from the attack, and her evidence played a key part in the conviction of Stone.

Chance to put babies on ice

CAREER women are being offered the chance to put their families on hold by a British fertility clinic which will freeze and store their eggs until they decide to have children, *writes Sarah Boseley*.

The Assisted Reproduction and Gynaecology Centre in London is the first in the country to be granted a licence to freeze human eggs — a tricky procedure at the forefront of IVF technology. The centre launched the service last week for career women and for those who know they will be made infertile by treatment for cancer.

But the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority will not yet permit the clinic to use the frozen eggs to create babies because of the risks of damage to the child.

"We don't yet feel that there is enough research that there wouldn't be actual or reasonable theoretical risk of harm to their developmental potential," an HFEA spokeswoman said.

Eight children have been born around the world from eggs that were once frozen.

Women advance at work but few changes at home

David Brindle

WOMEN are increasingly taking jobs and are moving towards equality in the workplace, but still have to do the lion's share of chores at home, a report confirmed last week.

Further closing of the gender gap is likely to be limited because more than one in five middle-aged women care for an elderly, sick or disabled relative or friend, the report says.

Social Focus on Men and Women, published by the Office for National Statistics, brings together data on the contrasting lives of the sexes. It concludes that while women have made inroads at the workplace, men have failed to play their part at home.

Carol Summerfield, the report's editor, says: "The woman's role in the home has not changed so dramatically from that of her mother."

The most startling change chronicled by the report is in the numbers of men and women who go to work. In 1971, 91 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women were "economically active" — that is, either in jobs or registered as unemployed. The respective figures are now 85 per cent and 72 per cent.

The main reasons for the trends are early retirement among men and, more especially, growth in employment among women with children. The number of working mothers with children under five has doubled since 1973; most women with young children now have jobs. Whereas in 1979 only 24 per cent of working women returned to their job within 11 months of having a baby, 67 per cent now do so, two-thirds of them part-time.

The report also shows how pay differentials for men and women have narrowed, despite a blip in the latest figures, revealed last month. Women now get 80 per cent of male hourly earnings on average, and as much as 95 per cent in clerical and secretarial posts. Among part-timers, they get 84 per cent on average, and more — 101 per cent — in the clerical and secretarial sector.

At home, however, there seems to be little change. Women always or usually do the washing and ironing in almost 80 per cent of couples — while men do their bit in just 2 per cent of cases, and only 5 per cent of couples say the man usually or always does the shopping.

In Brief

TWO Liberal Democrat peers are trying to stop the Lord Chancellor exercising his power to sit as a judge in cases involving the Government, which they claim breaches the doctrine of the separation of powers.

THE opening of the national air traffic control centre at Swanwick, Hampshire has been further delayed until 2002, underlying the Government's problems in achieving partial privatisation of the service.

MATHS and science graduates are to be lured into teaching with golden hellos of £5,000, to help stem the mounting recruitment crisis.

SURGEONS should have to prove they are competent, probably every five years, their ruling body announced as an inquiry opened in response to the unnecessary deaths of babies at the hands of three Bristol heart surgeons.

THE anti-drugs co-ordinator, Keith Hellawell, backed calls for random drug-testing in the workplace, but warned that tests should be used to offer employees help, and not to sack them.

A LANDMARK ruling that will protect an estimated 2.5 million employees confirmed that workers sacked for mental illness can claim compensation under the Disability Discrimination Act.

BRITAIN'S first private toll motorway, the Birmingham northern relief road, has received clearance after a 10-year battle.

MILLIONAIRE philanthropist Vivien Duffield is to donate £7 million to museum education centres around the country.

THREE Irish National Liberation Army prisoners who murdered loyalist leader Billy Wright in prison were jailed for life but are likely to be free within two years, under the terms of the Good Friday agreement.

A FLYING Squad detective forced to retire after her hearing was damaged through being routinely "wired up" with a radio receiver and earpiece was awarded £175, 792 damages against the Metropolitan police.

CRIMINAL barrister David Calvert-Smith is to head the demoralised Crown Prosecution Service.

FRANK Gillard, the distinguished BBC war correspondent, has died aged 90.

NICHOLAS Budgen, one of the most idiosyncratic right-wing Conservative MPs, has died at the age of 60.

Pinochet fights extradition

Jamie Wilson, Will Woodward and Vikram Dodd

LAWYERS acting for the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet claimed on Monday that the Queen could theoretically face arrest abroad for alleged crimes by Britain if the general were not released and allowed to return to Chile.

The claim was made during a day of high drama with lawyers debating the legality of Gen Pinochet's detention and the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, under fire in the High Court and House of Commons for his handling of the case.

The heat on the general intensified when Switzerland filed a formal request for his extradition to Geneva for the disappearance in 1977 of a Swiss-Chilean student, Alexis Jaccard. Sweden is expected to follow suit after three relatives filed complaints of murder and kidnapping last weekend. France and at least one other European country are considering lodging extradition requests.

While Crown lawyers at the High Court in London accused Gen Pinochet of ordering the deaths of more than 4,000 people, his lawyers argued for judicial review and a writ of habeas corpus to set him free.

A Chilean air force jet has been waiting at RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire, to fly him home, but Gen Pinochet remains under police guard at the London Clinic while a Spanish judge investigating human rights violations during his military regime — from 1973 to 1990 — prepares an application for his extradition.

Even if Gen Pinochet's lawyers defeated the Spanish request, he might still be held while the Swiss and any subsequent extradition requests were considered.

In the High Court, Clive Nicholls QC, appearing for Gen Pinochet, told Lord Bingham, the Lord Chief Justice, sitting with Mr Justice Richards and Mr Justice Collins, that under international law Gen Pinochet had continuing immunity as a former head of state.

Mr Nicholls said if this was not enforced "any attempt to deny Senator Pinochet immunity will open up the prospect of the Queen being extradited from America to Argentina for the murder of Argentinian nationals killed in the Falklands or to Ireland for the murder of Irish citizens in Gibraltar".

Mr Nicholls accused Mr Straw of acting improperly by "sitting on" an obviously defective warrant.

But Alun Jones, QC, for the Crown, denied that Gen Pinochet was entitled to immunity. "The function of the head of state of Chile is not the systematic abuse, torture and elimination of his opponents. No function of a head of state includes that. It would be absurd," he told the court.

Mr Jones said a second warrant for the general's arrest had been sought because the first had been obtained in a hurry "after the police received information that Pinochet was due, in spite of his medical condition, to leave the UK".

Lord Bingham indicated that the court would reserve judgment.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed that two leading Chilean military officials had cancelled an arms-buying trip to Britain. It raised fears that a £60 million deal to sell them three surplus Type 22 frigates would be abandoned.

The shadow foreign secretary, Michael Howard, called for a Commons statement about the Government's "messy" handling of the extradition request.

Comment, page 12
Le Monde, page 13
Washington Post, page 16

The churchyard of Dixton, near Monmouth, Gwent, submerged in last weekend's floods PHOTO: JEFF MORGAN

Worst floods for 20 years leave £100m bill

Geoffrey Gibbs and Jill Treanor

INSURANCE companies are bracing themselves for £100 million claims after the severe weather last weekend which left at least 12 people dead, and a trail of damage across Wales and the west of England.

It was some of the worst flooding seen in those parts of the country for more than 20 years. Eight people died in road accidents caused by the treacherous conditions and two canoeists lost their lives. In Wales, the body of 25-year-old Mark Davidge, who was swept into the river Rhondda, a tributary of the Taff, at Treorchy, was recovered in Cardiff, more than 25 miles downstream.

In Devon, police said James Bilson, aged 18, died after being trapped beneath his canoe in the river Dart near Ashburton. Police divers who tried to rescue him had their masks ripped off by the force of the water.

On Monday, the agency said the rivers Wye, Monnow, Vrynwy, Towey, and the Upper Severn, were at peak levels. And the Severn was thought to be vulnerable to torrential rain on the Welsh hills, which could have a delayed impact on lower stretches of the river.

The extensive flooding of properties and agricultural land is expected to lead to huge insurance claims. But the damage is not believed to be as bad as the Midlands floods earlier this year, which cost £150 million, and the Association of British Insurers believes the costs will be nearer £100 million.

Insurers said the severe weather had hit some of the less populated regions of the country and that the winds had not been strong enough to cause structural damage.



Arms sales hit post-cold war high

ARMS sales soared last year to record post-cold-war levels, and Britain consolidated its position as the world's second-biggest weapons exporter, an authoritative study shows, *writes Richard Norton-Taylor.*

Britain supplied arms worth £5 billion, an increase of 5 per cent, says The Military Balance, an annual review compiled by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The international arms market grew by about 12 per cent. While the United States continued to dominate the trade — worth about $47 billion last year — Russia's share fell from more than 35 per cent 10 years ago to 5.4 per cent last year.

Although the report does not say which countries Britain supplied arms to, they include Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, India and Pakistan — all of them involved in regional disputes or political conflict.

Saudi Arabia imported $11 billion worth of military equipment, significantly more than any other country. The imports included 36 Tornado bombers and 20 Hawk trainers.

John Chipman, the institute's director said: "Stand-off military threats invite only partial and temporary capitulation. Once the threat to use air power has been met by some concessions, building up the threat again becomes both politically and technically more difficult.

"Dictators understand this. That is why the diplomacy of the weak has become much more dynamic than the strategic thinking of the strong."

Moratorium on genetic crop growth

John Vidal

THE Government claimed week to have imposed a virtual moratorium on the commercial growing of genetically modified crops, but was rebuked by environment and consumer groups who said it was allowing their go-ahead under cover of more experiments.

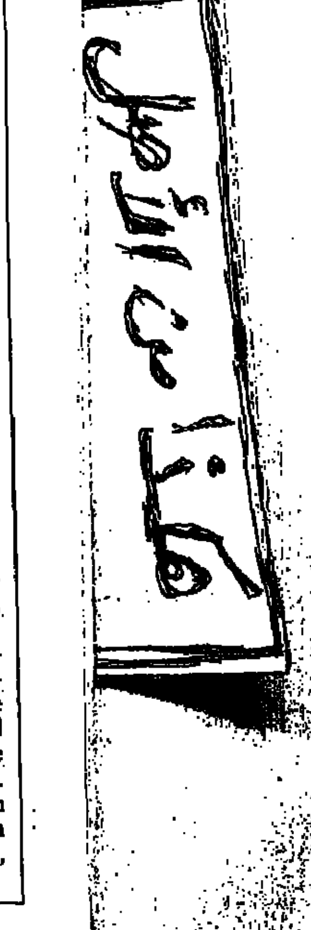
In a package of measures designed to leave the door open to the powerful biotechnology industry but also to reassure anxious consumers, the environment minister, Michael Meacher, said no commercial growing of the controversial crops would be allowed before autumn 1999.

But the Government will allow six farms to grow GM crops on a commercial basis under strict ecological monitoring to establish the effects of wide-scale planting. The first crops are expected to be oilseed rape, to be planted in August 1999 and harvested in July 2000. Until now there have only been small-scale trials, without ecological monitoring. Mr Meacher said further commercial plantings will depend on the results of the monitoring. The Government will also ban commercial growing of insect-resistant crops for three years.

"We are effectively declaring a moratorium," said Mr Meacher. "We must take the precautionary approach. We may decide that we need extra time before we give any go-ahead for commercial planting."

Giving evidence to the Lords select committee on the European Community, Mr Meacher and the food safety minister, Jeff Rooker, announced that the Government would also tighten the industry's self-regulatory system. It may also set up with supermarkets a surveillance system to monitor any unexpected health effects of the crops, and convene an ethics committee.

The measures were broadly welcomed by English Nature, the Government's wildlife advisers, and the RSPB. But environment, health and consumer watchdog groups said the proposals were full of loopholes. "The Government is relying on industry to monitor itself which always fails," said Charles Secrett, director of Friends of the Earth.



Straw rejects Neill's euro funding ban

Alan Travis

THE Government will campaign in favour of the euro in the planned referendum on the single currency, despite a ban recommended by the Neill committee on standards in public life, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw made clear last week.

Mr Straw made plain his disagreement with Lord Neill's insistence that governments should remain neutral in such campaigns when he gave evidence to the home affairs select committee.

He is also likely to set aside the Neill committee recommendation for a ban on government literature being published about referendum issues on which people are to vote.

The Home Secretary told MPs that since the referendums would be held only after the Government had secured a mandate for them to take place, it "seems unrealistic to expect the Government to be neutral on an issue to which ministers have devoted substantial energy and resources in getting through Parliament".

He said the suggestion that public money should only be allowed to be used for party political campaigning during such periods ignored the fact that there was no point in politicians pretending they were not ministers when they were.

Mr Straw drew on his own experience in fighting for a No vote in the 1975 Common Market membership referendum to support his argument that there was no precedent for government neutrality in this situation.

"We got badly beaten by two to one . . . Money was allocated in equal amounts to the Yes and No campaigns and a digest of the Government's white paper was distributed to every household in the country. It was not unreasonable for the Government to do that to put its position forward."

Although Mr Straw is officially committed to further consultations on the Neill committee's recommendations, it is clear that the Government will veto his proposed rules for the coming ballot over joining the single European currency.

The Government campaigned vigorously in both the referendums last year, for Scottish and Welsh devolution. Some £2 million was spent on producing summaries of the official white papers outlining the powers of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and distributing them to every household taking part in the ballot.

These summaries were specifically criticised by the committee as "wholly inappropriate". The report added that the committee was disturbed "that the referendum campaign in Wales was very one-sided, with the last-minute No organisation seriously under-funded".

Mr Straw also ruled out any moves towards the state funding of political parties, saying that that way led down the slippery slope to the kind of political corruption found abroad.

Bank chief blunders into job loss gaffe

THE governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, last week blundered into a political storm when he said that job losses in the Northeast were a price worth paying in order to beat inflation, *writes Peter Hetherington.*

Asked to defend the bank's interest rate policy during a meeting about the high-profile economic misfortunes which have hit the Northeast recently, Mr George, who has overseen five interest rate rises and one cut since Labour came to power, was asked: "Are you saying unemployment in the Northeast is an acceptable price to pay to curb inflation in the South?"

After a pause, Mr George replied: "Yes, I suppose in a sense I am." He added: "It is not desirable, but the fact is that we can only affect through monetary policy the state of demand in the economy as a whole."

Mr George later claimed his comments — which echoed former chancellor Norman Lamont's 1991 claims that "unemployment is a price well worth paying" — had been misrepresented. But some Labour MPs claimed that Mr George had exposed the reality of Treasury policy.

Derek Foster, MP for Bishop Auckland, the constituency next to Tony Blair's, said: "He has admitted what I have suspected all along — but what the Government tried to claim is not the case."

Dennis MacShane, Labour MP for Rotherham, called on the governor to resign if he could not accept that policies had to be modified to help the country's industrial areas. The region has recently seen the closure of hi-tech plants run by Siemens and Fujitsu.

But Mr Blair insisted: "What he [Mr George] was simply saying is that you had to set interest rate policy for the whole of the economy, not one particular region. You couldn't, in other words, have differentiated interest rates in different parts of the economy."

Mr George said in a personal statement: "In fact, I said explicitly that rising unemployment in the Northeast was undesirable.

"In response to a journalist's suggestion that regional unemployment was 'an acceptable price to pay', I made it clear — as I have very often before — that monetary policy can only target the situation in the economy as a whole, not particular regions or sectors, however uncomfortable that reality might be.

"I pointed out among other things that stable monetary policy had allowed unemployment in the economy as a whole to fall to the lowest level it has been in 18 years."

Roger Lyons, general secretary of the Manufacturing Science and Finance Union, said the comments "proved beyond doubt that it [the bank] is out of touch with the events in the real world".

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Diplomatic posts face closure

Ian Black

BRITAIN may close up to 25 embassies and consulates abroad as part of Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's drive to modernise the Foreign Office and deploy in new areas of international tension or opportunity.

According to an internal document reviewing Britain's diplomatic presence abroad, eight posts are on a list for likely closure, with 17 more under consideration as part of a process undertaken after the comprehensive spending review and signalled at the time of the Legg report into the arms-to-Africa affair.

List A includes Aden, the former capital of South Yemen, now ruled from the unitary capital Sana'a, Cleveland in Ohio, Pusan in South Korea, Seville in Spain and the High Commission in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. List B are Adelaide, Alexandria, Brisbane, Lyon, Managua and the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa. The third list includes Bonn — the German capital is moving to Berlin — Naples and Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

Mr Cook has already said he wants to divert overstretched resources to the oil-rich countries of the Caspian Basin, which he is to visit later this month, as well as to increase the British presence in the former communist countries of central and eastern Europe, which are queuing up to join the European Union and Nato.

The Foreign Office is also planning to advertise the job of British consul-general in New York, the biggest commercial post in a diplomatic service striving harder to emphasise its usefulness to trade and export promotion.

In July's spending review the Foreign Office secured a modest 2 per cent budget increase over three years, but Mr Cook insists the process of modernisation must continue, and pledged to reform a structure that was criticised as over-hierarchical in the Legg report.

Closing many of these posts could replenish Foreign Office coffers. Among the most marketable are the Naples consulate at Villa Crispi, worth £3.7 million. But there remains strong resistance to selling off the opulent Paris building, or the Moscow embassy.

Law Society attacks gazumping stress

Clare Dyer

HOMEBUYING, the third most stressful event in the life of the average Briton — exceeded in trauma only by death and divorce — could become less of an ordeal if proposals by the Law Society are given government backing.

Transaction 2000 aims to concertina the 14-week obstacle course of conveyancing in England and Wales into eight weeks or so. The idea is to tie buyers and sellers into the deal within two weeks of accepting an offer, instead of the current eight weeks, thereby reducing the risk of being gazumped.

Under the scheme, sellers prepare a pack including a draft contract, legal information form and local authority search before calling in the estate agent.

The society is pressing the Government, which is reviewing the process, to give legislative sanction to the scheme. Otherwise it is unlikely to be taken up because sellers will be unwilling to pay the £100 to £150 charges for searches a cost which now falls on the buyer.

A second problem is that sellers are not usually averse to higher price offers from gazumpers, so they have much less incentive to shorten the time between offer and exchange of contracts.

The package could also end battles between buyers and sellers over the fixtures and fittings, by detailing what is included or excluded. Lawyers say clients are often appalled to find a gaping hole in place of the feature fireplace which first attracted them to the property.

The package should also reduce the danger of moving next door to the neighbour from hell, or finding yourself embroiled in a longstanding boundary dispute. Sellers will have to reveal whether any boundaries have been moved, and whether there have been any disputes with the neighbours.

● The president of the Law Society, Michael Mathews, mounted a scathing attack on Government plans to reform legal aid. He claimed ministers were forgetting the vulnerable and seeing justice as a commodity to be left to the marketplace laws of supply and demand.

He accused ministers of spreading myths about legal aid and said the reality was that legal aid spending increased by only 1.2 per cent last year, while the number of cases went up by 3.2 per cent. And 92 per cent of civil legal aid cases were won.

Lords snub PR voting system

**Michael White
and Nicholas Watt**

THE Government last week suffered an embarrassing defeat over its own democratic credentials a week after telling hereditary peers they must lose their voting rights because they lack democratic legitimacy.

The 165-140 defeat by a cross-party coalition came on the European Parliamentary Elections Bill over ministers' determination to run next June's Euro-elections on a new form of proportional representation (PR).

It requires voters to back a regional list of party candidates without being able to choose between the individuals put on the list by the parties — the so-called "closed list" system.

An appeal by Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish, himself a former MP, to the House to "rescue democracy" won the support of peers from other parties, including Lord John Evans, a former member of Labour's ruling national executive committee.

Hugh Kerr, the renegade left-wing MEP, urged the Commons to endorse the proposed switch to an "open list" which would allow voters to tick individual names on the ballot paper as well as a party. It is certain ministers will reverse the vote in the Commons.

But the Government finally got its way over the issue of predatory newspaper pricing when peers rejected an attempt by the Liberal Democrats to curb the practice, by 116 to 87.

The plot thickens

Eric Ambler

BACK in the 1980s Len Deighton gave a Savoy lunch for Eric Ambler, and the absent Graham Greene sent a cable: "To the master from one of his disciples." Most of the other best-selling disciples were round the table: John le Carré, Frederick Forsyth and half a dozen more.

The celebration was not mere literary flannel. Ambler, who has died aged 89, had by then written 20 novels and nearly as many screenplays. He was honoured as the writer who had brought the political thriller to maturity in the 1930s, when Europe was about to explode.

Ambler, who was born in London, had no literary background. His parents were members of a variety act and warned him off the theatre. He made it to grammar school and London university. He later joined an advertising agency where he wrote copy for a chocolate laxative under the banner: "Exlax for incomplete elimination."

His first book, The Dark Frontier (1935), dealt with a project to build a nuclear bomb, which his scientific studies had shown was theoretically possible. It brought him only £30 in cash, but also a six-book contract with a £100 advance on each.

He moved to Paris and full-time writing. The Ambler-Greene style of political thriller found its distinctive form in the years between that first book and the vortex of war.

When war broke out he was over 30, with a certain literary reputation but no army background, and so — like Evelyn Waugh — he was difficult to place in the military machine. He was commissioned in the artillery, and commanded a Bofors gun installed on the lawn of Chequers to defend Winston Churchill from low-flying German planes. Later he was posted to write army training films with Peter Ustinov, and to script The Way Ahead, directed by Carol Reed, about how a motley assortment of civilians could be forged into a crack fighting unit. It was so prized as a morale booster that it was put on general release.

But the war experience that cut deepest in Ambler's memory had nothing to do with spying, or the black arts of propaganda. It was working with John Huston on a documentary about ordinary Italians emerging from the German occupation, made on the heels of the Fifth Army's advance towards Rome.

The town had been left in ruins by the retreating Germans, and to reach it the film team had to cross a coverless escarpment still under fire from artillery and mortars dug in on the surrounding hills. When they had picked their way through the unburied Allied dead, Huston and Ambler realised that their interpreter, and all but one of their crew, were no longer following them; when they entered the town they could find only a handful of Italian survivors in the rubble.

Huston did make a short film about San Pietro, mostly using re-enacted combat footage, but with one powerful real sequence. This showed GIs bundling their dead unceremoniously into body bags, and dumping them in shallow graves. Washington banned the film because, as Ambler commented drily, it was not the business of the War Department to make anti-war movies.

After the war those early film contacts drew him into writing screenplays, mostly adapted from novels — from H G Wells's The Passionate Friends (1948) and Arnold Bennett's The Card (1952) to Nicholas Monsarrat's The Cruel Sea (1954). Ambler returned to books in 1951 with Judgment On Deltchev, an indictment of Stalinism. In the late 1950s he finally answered the call of Hollywood, where he met and married his second wife, Joan Harrison, who had been Alfred Hitchcock's trusted assistant and script doctor, and had become one of Tinseltown's first woman producers. A decade later, disenchanted, they returned to Europe, though they were unable to face the British tax system, and settled in Switzerland.



Ambler . . . 'Interviewing him, I had the disturbing delusion that I was in the presence of Alec Guinness playing George Smiley'

Joan's ill-health eventually drove them to return to Britain — she died in 1994. The thriller genre had become dominated by the camp followers of Ian Fleming's preposterous James Bond, and Ambler's influence was reflected more in the other-ranks attitude of Len Deighton's Harry Palmer, and the dark questioning of Greene and Le Carré. Interviewing him once, I had the disturbing delusion that I was in the presence not of Eric Ambler, but of Alec Guinness playing George Smiley.

The social set-up in some of his early work inevitably now seems dated. But in 1992, the Guardian commented that Ambler's books "have a seamless story telling, an implicit exploration of moral questions, a narrative pace and a proper credibility . . . that pops him up there as the greatest espionage and adventure thriller writer of the century". A grandiose title, but taking Ambler's 50 years of writing overall, it is hard to quarrel with that judgment.

Hugh Hebert

Eric Ambler, novelist, born June 28, 1909; died October 22, 1998

Britain's practical economist

Sir Alec Cairncross

FOR WELL over half a century Alec Cairncross, who has died aged 87, was an active, important and, for most of the time, outstanding figure in British economics. He was a highly-respected and much-liked member of the economic/administrative establishment of Britain; he was also well known across the Channel and the Atlantic — and indeed everywhere in the world of economics.

He acquired many of the distinctions that go with his professional stature: a knighthood, fellowship of the British Academy, presidency of the Royal Economic Society, a string of honorary doctorates and active membership in high positions of many research organisations.

Cairncross's name in economics was not associated with any particularly novel formula. Unlike some of his contemporaries, especially those he first encountered in Cambridge, above all J M Keynes and James Meade, he did not seek to advance economic science by means of purely analytical inventions. He was, however, perfectly at home in the most sophisticated aspects of modern economics, both mathematical and literary and in the world of model building.

Cairncross was born in Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, a member of a large family, several of whom became teachers (as was his mother). After graduating from Glasgow university he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, as a post-graduate student and then became a university lecturer. Here he was associated with the famous "circus" around Keynes, which included Meade and Austin Robinson, who remained his friends throughout their lives.

During the war years Cairncross became a temporary civil servant working in a number of departments, including for a short period the Economic Section of the Cabinet Office. In 1945 he became director of programmes in the Ministry of Aircraft Production, where Edwin (later Lord) Plowden also served and later became the first "chief planner". Although this early experience did not turn him into a full-fledged administrator, it gave Cairncross a thorough knowledge of the role of the professional advisers to ministers, which was invaluable later when he himself became an eminent economic adviser.

The next year or so was one of the high points of his career, when he became a member of the Economic Advisory Panel in Berlin and played a major part in the currency reform which laid the foundation for the German "economic miracle". It also built the foundation of the Bundesbank's monetary policy.

A short period of journalism was followed by a three-year spell as economic adviser at the Board of Trade (1946-1949) and another year in Paris as economist to the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), the "permanent" institution set up in the wake of the Marshall Plan. This period gave him a further opportunity to know and be known by economists, officials and ministers, both European and American, concerned with economic policy.

On returning home in 1951, Cairncross became professor of applied economics at Glasgow university, a post he held for 10 years and which consolidated his status as a distinguished teacher and researcher. His tenure was disrupted for about a year when he was asked to set up the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank in Washington.

Between 1961 and 1969 Cairncross was first economic adviser to the Government and then, on the retirement of Robert Hall, head of the Economic Section of the Cabinet Office. For the following nine years he was master of St Peter's College, Oxford. He returned to Washington as a visiting professor at the Brookings Institution and spent a brief period in India as a Leverhulme Fellow before, in 1972, becoming chancellor of the University of Glasgow, a position which he held for 24 years.

Cairncross was essentially a pragmatist and concentrated on the concrete problems of the economy as they presented themselves to policymakers. Although he was not given to ideology, he had decided ideas.

He married Mary Frances Glynn in 1943 and they had three sons and two daughters, one of whom, Frances, became a well-known economist. Mary died earlier this year.

Eric Roll

Sir Alexander Kirkland Cairncross, economist, born February 11, 1911; died October 21, 1998

Poet of the revolution

Germán List Arzubide

WITH the death of the poet Germán List Arzubide at the age of 100, Mexico has lost one of the last and most colourful figures from the revolution of the early years of this century.

List Arzubide was born in the elegant colonial city of Puebla at the end of the 19th century. In his childhood he was almost immediately caught up in the swirling battles of the Mexican Revolution, which for most of the second decade of this century saw the entire country ravaged as one band of armed men after another fought for supremacy.

As a teenager, List Arzubide himself joined the forces of one of those leaders, Venustiano Carranza, infamous for bringing about the death of perhaps the best-known of the rebels, Emiliano Zapata.

Carranza became the first post-revolutionary president before he himself was assassinated in 1921; but all the experiences of the revolutionary struggle led List Arzubide to found modern Mexico's first literary movement. This was the *estridentismo* school of poetry, which attempted to capture the energy, chaos and hope of revolution in their verses in a way somewhat similar to the surrealist group in Europe.

As the dust of the revolution gradually settled in the late 1920s, List Arzubide also made a name for himself as an activist in the newly emerging trade unions, run by the Mexican state. It was a time of great rhetoric and heroic attitudes, and his passionate "anti-imperialist" speeches led to one of the most colourful episodes of List Arzubide's life.

In 1929 the Nicaraguan guerrilla leader Cesar Augusto Sandino asked him to take the US flag he had captured from invading American troops to an international anti-imperialist congress being held in Frankfurt. List Arzubide not only took the flag, but paraded through the United States with it on his way to Europe. At the congress, he shared the chair with the French Communist writer Henri Barbusse, the widow of the Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat-Sen, and the future Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

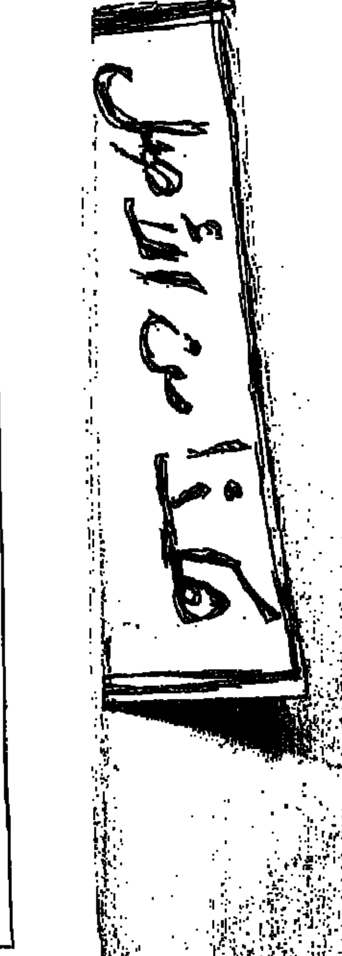
By the end of his life, List Arzubide had written more than 30 books of poems, plays, short stories and essays. He had founded several important literary magazines, and collaborated with almost every newspaper outlet available in Mexico.

But in his later years his work fell out of fashion, and he lived to see most of the promises of the revolution of his youth disintegrating under the weight of corruption, opportunism, and a refusal to change.

He leaves his daughter Nora and his son Rick.

Nick Caistor

Germán List Arzubide, revolutionary poet, born 1898; died October 17, 1998



Pale shadow of Oslo's promise

LAST-MINUTE brinkmanship apart, it was always more likely than not that the Israeli-Palestinian summit near Washington would finally produce another deal to keep the Middle East peace process inching forward. With suitcases packed and unpacked for the cameras, a direct mediating role for a United States president desperate for a diverting foreign policy success and some tempting last-minute sweeteners on offer, high drama was almost as certain as the bet that both sides needed agreement more than breakdown. But as the small print emerged it provided a sobering reminder of how low expectations have sunk since the handshake between the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, on the White House lawn in September 1993. Five years on, Oslo's promise of historic reconciliation to end the Middle East's 100 years' war has all but faded.

Long-signalled agreement to a new Israeli troop withdrawal from 13 per cent more of West Bank land was the easy part. But the link between that and Palestinian commitments to new security guarantees for Israel exposes the entire complicated bargain to the act of a single fanatic: and there are many of those on both sides. Giving the CIA the job of monitoring Palestinian compliance cannot guarantee success. Nor does Mr Arafat's pledge to revoke those parts of the Palestine Liberation Organisation charter calling for Israel's destruction. Like other elements of the Wye agreement this is a reaffirmation of previous commitments that have never been implemented. On the other side, with Ariel Sharon at his side as foreign minister, Binyamin Netanyahu has neutralised some rightwing critics, but still faces a struggle to convince coalition partners not to abandon him to a snap election.

And crucially, Wye's ungainly result is only another interim deal. Ahead lie months, more likely years, of bargaining over the really difficult bits — such as the status of Jerusalem, refugee rights and final borders. These were all so hard that the architects of Oslo left them to the end in the hope that when talks began there would be a new relationship between the two sides. The deadline for completing these negotiations is next May. But no one believes that can be met in a what one Israeli commentator has called "the fundamental reality of suspicion, aversion and distrust". Wye's modest achievements could, should have been reached two, even three years ago. Success is better than failure, but just keeping the show on the road is not enough.

Milosevic manoeuvres

IT HAS not taken long for the basic flaws in the Kosovo agreement to become apparent on the ground. A hard core of Serbian forces will not leave the region or even return to barracks if their withdrawal means that the Kosovo Liberation Army is going to establish a presence in areas from which the Serbs retreat. The KLA, on the other hand, will not hold back from trying to establish such a presence just because Western missions appeal to them to do so. Even though diplomats say that the ceasefire is basically holding, the skirmishing and the shoot-outs that have occurred every day since the agreement was reached indicate the difficulties. That is the picture already evident to the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission, which reported last week on the degree of Serbian compliance with the agreement so far. Both Serbian police and army units remain in Kosovo, it noted, in numbers far beyond what the agreement envisaged. It is on reports like these that General Wesley Clarke, the Nato commander, based his arguments when he gave Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav president, until Tuesday this week to make further withdrawals. The French foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, reinforced Gen Clarke's warning. But Mr Milosevic knows how reluctant Western countries are to revive the air threat. The Serbian government press, in claiming that the security forces are already down to "regular" levels, is no doubt echoing Mr Milosevic's line with Western envoys.

The trouble is that the more successful Nato is in forcing Serbian withdrawals the more likely it is that the KLA, although militarily very weak, will move into any vacuum created, at which point the Serbs will go back in. Diplomats are appealing to the KLA not to attack, and they may respond to that, but such moves do not have to be physically aggressive — a few flags would be enough to anger the Serbs or give them the excuse they need for staying. Since the Nato countries have no police or security forces of their own to interpose between the KLA and the Serbs, they are not in a position to argue that the Serbian security units be reduced to nil or to absolutely minimal levels.

Ultimately, negotiations between the Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians are meant to lead to the formation of a new police force. But such negotiations have not even started. As the Serbian forces are reduced, the military balance with the KLA shifts, the KLA takes advantage of the fact, the Serbs react. Endless conflicts about what is or is not a proper level for Serbian security forces can be envisaged, and innumerable arguments about the rights and wrongs of particular clashes are likely to entangle the members of the new body of international "verifiers". Meanwhile those verifiers are still far from being in place, with would-be contributors fearful for the safety of the men on the ground. The inherent messiness of the situation is perfect for Mr Milosevic, who can carry on hostilities at a low level, arguing all the way, without reaching the level of provocation that would resuscitate the air threat. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, in its annual report last week, concludes that air action without ground deployment is an empty strategy. The threat or reality of it produces a brief crisis resolved by an unenforceable agreement, whose failure leads to the next crisis. That is the pattern, unhappily, which we may already be beginning to see in Kosovo.

Quiet revolution in Germany

GERMANY has a revolutionary new political charter. The document signed last week by the Social Democratic party and the Greens sets out the broad lines of policy over the next four years of government. What is revolutionary is that Germany is parting company with two, perhaps three, shibboleths. They are nationality by blood, a concept essential to German identity for more than a century, nuclear power, a programme once very much part of German high technology, and less certainly, monetary stability of the kind that the Bundesbank has put at the centre of German and European economic strategy. These breaks and possible breaks with previous patterns will have a large impact on Germany and on the rest of Europe.

By making it easier for resident foreigners to acquire German nationality the SPD-Green government is essentially bringing to an end the idea of nationality by blood. Millions of foreigners, above all Turks, will be able to become Germans once the promised laws are passed. The key change does not lie so much in the reduced requirements for qualifying periods of residence as in the acceptance of dual citizenship. This has been for years the more important bar to citizenship for the Turks of Germany, who feared loss of rights in a home country to which many of them frequently return. This will improve relations between Germany and Turkey and therefore between the European Union and Turkey. Significant consequences could flow from that. It will also change German politics, introducing perhaps 2-3 million new voters at the next general election. Most of them will be very grateful, at least initially, to the SPD and the Greens. That is bound to make a difference in a country where political margins have always been narrow.

The stipulations on nuclear power commit the coalition to initiate a programme, within the lifetime of this government, for the eventual but irreversible phasing out of nuclear power stations. While the proposals are part of the general European shrinking away from nuclear power that has been apparent at least since Chernobyl, they represent a large advance for the anti-nuclear energy camp in Europe. The move away from monetary stability is a potential change that is more to be read between the lines of the agreement. It can be seen more clearly in the increasingly forthright statements of Oskar Lafontaine, the finance minister, and Joschka Fischer, the foreign minister, on economic subjects. They have openly called for interest rate cuts and stressed that monetary policy must take economic growth and unemployment into account. The changes signalled in the German coalition pact are of very different kinds. Taken together, they represent a big shift in the European political landscape.

Weasel words from Pinochet's apologists

Andrew Rawnsley

IN ONE of his novels, Arthur C Clarke speculates that historians of the future will label our century the Century of Torture. Its grisliest hallmark has been mass murder as an act of state.

Hitler, Stalin and Mao top the bloody league, which has representatives from every continent: Pol Pot of Cambodia, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Idi Amin of Uganda, Mohammed Suharto of Indonesia, the Shah of Iran, Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Francisco Franco of Spain, Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia. I could go on, and many would go on to add, for their offences against the Geneva conventions in Southeast Asia, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger of the United States.

Safe, smug Britain congratulates itself that it has never produced one of these monsters. Historians of the future will not be so kind. They will turn pale not just at the length of this century's list of tyranny, but at the reluctance of the rest of a world that called itself civilised to bring despotism to justice.

General Augusto Pinochet, at least until his recent arrest, was enjoying a terribly comfortable retirement from killing people. This brute toppled a democratic government. His regime murdered thousands of people, some of them Britons. Yet on his regular trips to Britain he was fêted as an honoured guest. Whisked through red-carpeted VIP lounges, he lunched at Fortnum & Mason, took tea with Margaret Thatcher, enjoyed guided tours of arms factories, and was fond of Madame Tussauds — though I would have thought the London Dungeon was more his cup of poison.

The reaction to his arrest tells us why the democracies have connived for so long in making life cosy for tyrants. The most predictable of the general's apologists, but no less repulsive for that, have been his old muckers in the Conservative party and the Tory press. There is no doubt that were the Tories still running Britain, the general would be going about his business as usual. It is a trifle unfortunate that the old boy killed rather a lot of people, they say, but he did knock the Chilean economy into shape. By the same logic, these people would have acquitted the Nazis on the grounds that Hitler built some splendid autobahns.

As for the Falklands war, Gen Pinochet supported Britain because Chile and Argentina were historic enemies that, just before the outbreak of the hostilities in the South Atlantic, had almost gone to war with each other. His alliance of convenience with Britain is no plea in mitigation for murder.

The truth is that they seek to excuse Gen Pinochet because he is one of their own. Were Fidel Castro under arrest in London, something tells me that Baroness Thatcher and the editorialists of the Daily Telegraph would not be pleading for his release with the passion that they clamour to have the Santiago One sprung. What they are saying is that human rights and the rule of law don't count if you are a fellow-traveller of the right.

Almost as disturbing are the soft-headed appeasers. He's a frail old fellow with a bad back, they tell us. Have a heart; let him go home. Their chief spokesman is the Archbishop of Canterbury. Dr George Carey has called on the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, "to be compassionate in this situation".

But we are already showing the general more compassion than the justice system would normally dispense on a man wanted for murder. He is not chained to his bed. Unlike the victims of his regime, he did not disappear in the middle of the night, he will not have electrodes attached to his testicles, he will not be dumped from a helicopter with his stomach slit open, his family will not be murdered and buried in a mass grave. If he is brought to trial and convicted in Spain, or elsewhere, he will spend the rest of his days in a warm cell. I am sure generosity will be shown in arranging visiting rights for Baroness Thatcher.

More dangerous, because more supple, are the sophisticates of Realpolitik. The worldly wisemen of the UK Foreign Office and No 10 Downing Street are in a flap. The affair challenges their view that there is nothing so horrific that the diplomatic Establishment shouldn't smooth it over. Sure, they will say, they revile Gen Pinochet as much as you do. But, oh dear, his arrest raises so many awkward issues for the pourers of oil on bloody waters

They were alarmed when the Labour minister Peter Mandelson declared that for "such a brutal dictator" to claim diplomatic immunity would be "a pretty gut-wrenching thing". For the first time in his political life, Mr Mandelson's gut spoke not just for the Labour party, but for all decent people. But his remarks cause the self-styled sophisticates to wince.

THE WORLD is full of ghastly people we cannot help doing business with, they say. Why assist in bringing a retired dictator to justice when we do business with the autocrats of China? Because we can, that is the answer. Not being able to punish every tyrant is not an argument for punishing none of them.

The most subtle case for releasing the general is that his detention will send a counter-productive message to other despots. Gen Pinochet relinquished power only once he had extracted an amnesty from his own country. If the Chilean people can live with that, then so should we.

The first thing wrong with this argument is that the Chilean people only live with Pinochet because his army gave them no choice. The second thing wrong is that he was no respecter of national boundaries. His regime internationalised its crimes by having opponents in exile assassinated and killing the citizens of other countries. And the thing most wrong with this argument is that the worst message we can send to present or future tyrants is that the international community will grant them a life-long pardon for their crimes.

In the absence of an international criminal court to deal with these monsters, we have to use the laws and opportunities that come to hand. It is the least atonement we can offer to the victims of our Century of Torture. — *The Observer*

Nikitin faces Soviet-style show trial

Marie Jégo

AFTER three years of investigations, the trial of the environmental whistleblower, Alexander Nikitin, opened in St Petersburg on October 20. Nikitin, aged 44, stands accused by the Russian security service, the FSB (formerly the KGB), of "high treason through espionage and the disclosure of state secrets". The prosecution will call for a prison sentence of 12 to 20 years.

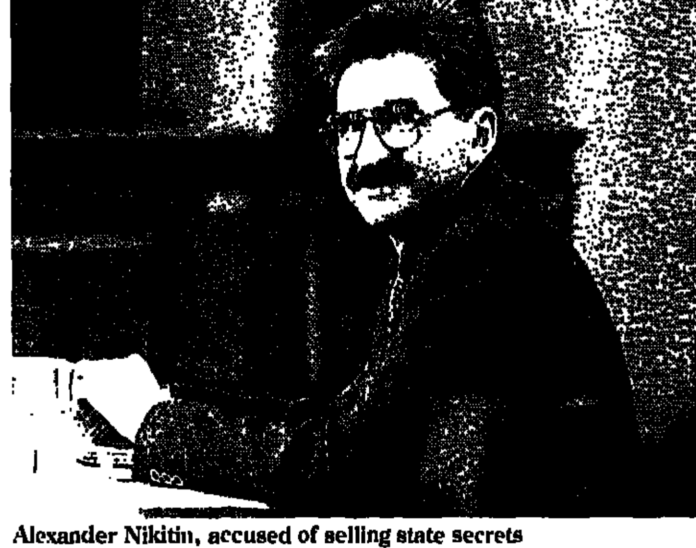
Captain Nikitin, who retired from Russia's Northern Fleet in 1992, supplied his employer, Bellona, a Norwegian environmental protection organisation, with information about radioactive pollution in the waters of the Barents Sea, off the Kola peninsula, where most of the Northern Fleet's nuclear submarines are based.

According to a report which Bellona published in August 1996, and which Nikitin helped to write, 21,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste and 24,000 tonnes of irradiated fuel are stored "without any security" in the Arctic region, not far from the Norwegian coast.

An alleged "spy" who had supplied "a foreign power" (Norway) with information regarded as sensitive by the FSB, Nikitin came to be seen by international opinion as a victim of Russia's security service, and the country's first prisoner of conscience in the Yeltsin era.

Quite apart from the trial, which will take place behind closed doors (after an initial session on October 20 that was attended by foreign journalists and observers), Nikitin's case shows that, although a new penal code came into force in January last year, judicial practices inherited from Andrei Vyshinsky, the chief prosecutor at the Moscow treason trials of 1936-38, persist to this day. A hangover from that period is the fact that the accused appears in court in a cage.

"Our courts have remained Soviet," says Yuri Schmidt, Nikitin's defence counsel, who used to specialise in the defence of dissidents. "Here we're dealing with old-fashioned methods based on fear and disinformation. But times have changed. In the old days everything was controlled from on high — the defence counsel was appointed by the court, and the judge had his arm twisted. Very little information filtered through. Thanks to international pressure and our defence league, we've managed to make much headway."



Alexander Nikitin, accused of selling state secrets

At the beginning of February 1996, the FSB launched a major operation against Russian activists working for Bellona. Their offices and homes in Murmansk, Severodvinsk (near Archangel), St Petersburg and even Siberia were ransacked, and documents, diskettes and computers were confiscated. Some 100 people were taken in for questioning.

'Thanks to international pressure and our defence league, we've managed to make much headway'

The FSB arrested Nikitin at his St Petersburg home on February 6, 1996. Held in solitary confinement at the local Kresty jail, he was assisted, as is customary in such "sensitive" cases, by a lawyer appointed by the court, who happened to be a former member of the security service.

Schmidt, the defence counsel of Nikitin's choice, was rejected by the FSB because he had refused to submit to the "security measures" required in espionage cases, which would have meant having his mail opened and his telephone tapped, and not being allowed to travel abroad.

Protesting that he should be allowed to enjoy the individual liberties guaranteed by the constitution, Schmidt convinced the Constitutional Court in the spring of 1996 that he should be allowed to plead the case, and that the trial should take place under a civil jurisdiction.

Another victory came on December 14, 1996, when Nikitin was released on bail. Placed under house arrest in St Petersburg, he and his wife Tatyana Chernova have been subjected ever since to constant harassment: they have been followed and threatened; their telephone has been tapped; they are summoned at inconvenient times; and their property has been damaged.

In January 1997, Nikitin's wife left for Oslo, where their daughter lives. On her way out of the country, she was given a close body search, and her passport was stamped: "Exit for permanent residence abroad."

"Nikitin? We won't hold him back. Once the investigations are over, he'll be able to leave," said the then Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, apparently unaware that two months earlier the security service had announced that it had wound up its investigations.

"They have no case," says Schmidt. Evidence of that, he argues, can be seen in the fact that the charges against Nikitin have been reformulated no fewer than seven times. In March 1996, for example, defence ministry experts decided that information revealed by Nikitin about the sinking of the nuclear submarine Komsomolets in the Norwegian Sea in 1989 (in which 42 people lost their lives) was a state secret.

A few weeks later, that charge was withdrawn, once the FSB realised that the sinking had been widely reported in both the local and the foreign press. The Komsomolets episode was apparently partly responsible for the security service hounding Nikitin: Admiral Chernov — a former commander-in-chief of the Northern Fleet, who accused his successor, Admiral Erofeyev, of being responsible for the sinking of the Komsomolets (Erofeyev allegedly ordered the submarine to go to sea although it had been officially declared damaged) — happens to be Nikitin's father-in-law.

It is difficult to predict the outcome of Nikitin's trial. His defence lawyers feared, when it opened, that the judge might postpone proceedings by referring the case back to the FSB "for further investigation".

Schmidt deplores the court's dependency on the FSB: "The judge, for example, has access to all the documents in the dossier, but his two assessors are allowed access to certain documents only with the FSB's permission."

He still believes he has a good chance of getting the charge against Nikitin thrown out. While he deplores what he calls "the mounting influence of the former KGB", Schmidt is not worried that the clout of the security service will be greatly boosted by the appointment of former master spy, Yevgeny Primakov, as prime minister last September. "He has other fish to fry," Schmidt says hopefully.

(October 22)

Pinochet confronts his past

EDITORIAL

QUITE apart from its political, legal or diplomatic implications, the news that 82-year-old General Augusto Pinochet had been placed under house arrest in London could not have been more welcome.

However the affair is resolved, it is particularly heart-warming that some kind of last-minute justice has finally caught up with the former Chilean dictator, now in his twilight years, if only to remind him that there are men and women who have not forgotten how, in September 1973, he resorted to murder and torture to topple Salvador Allende's constitutionally elected regime and replace it with a heinous dictatorship.

The putsch itself was a bloodbath in which some 3,000 people lost their lives. People have since tended to forget what happened in its aftermath: the "disappearances", the systematic torture of opponents, and suspected opponents, of the regime, the mutilation for life of thousands of men and women, the suspects whom Pinochet's henchmen subjected to electrocution, the parents who were forced to listen to their children's screams as they were being tortured in the next room.

One man has proclaimed the simple fact that there is no such thing as statutory limitation, nor will there ever be. He is the Spanish investigating magistrate, Baltasar Garzón, who for years conducted investigations into GAL (the Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups set up in the early eighties to combat the activities of ETA, the military wing of the Basque separatist movement).

Along with his colleague, Manuel Garcia Castellon, Garzón is striving to apply the law — not some politically opportune or historically motivated tenet, but the simple basic law that says people are entitled to their human rights.

Pinochet's regime was responsible, among other things, for the "disappearance" of 80 Chileans who were either of Spanish origin or had dual nationality. On that basis, Garzón has demanded the extradition of the general and issued an arrest warrant through Interpol which resulted in his being placed under police guard in London.

A tough battle lies ahead. The two magistrates' request will need to be confirmed first by Spain's conservative government, and then by Tony Blair's Labour government. The Chilean authorities have protested that Pinochet, who is a senator for life, enjoys diplomatic immunity.

Pinochet can appeal against the magistrates' decision on a number of counts. What is more, he has the support of several Latin American regimes which are reluctant to be reminded of the "dirty wars" once waged by their own armies. They believe, wrongly, that you can create a lasting civil peace by forgiving the torturers and forgetting their victims.

When he came to power, Blair promised Britain would adopt a more ethical foreign policy. Here is a truly historic opportunity for him, and indeed Madrid, to seize. Europe needs to show the world — and more particularly people such as Ratko Mladic, Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic — that it means business when it says the notion of a time limit cannot be applied to crimes against humanity.

(October 20)

French fear EU officials bearing gifts

COMMENT

WITH tricky negotiations under way in Brussels over the future of the European budget, it came as a surprise to learn that the French regions have not been taking full advantage of the grants they receive from the European Development Fund.

Since 1994 Brussels has made available 43 billion francs ($8 billion) to 21 of France's 22 regions (the Ile-de-France region that includes Greater Paris is too rich to qualify for aid), with money intended for community programmes.

However, over a near five-year period only about 20 billion francs has so far been allocated to projects — the lowest take-up rate of any European Union country.

At the end of next year, any unused grant monies will revert to the EU so, not surprisingly, regional councillors across the nation are anxiously trying to drum up support for new projects. And rightly so: urgent action needs to be taken to avoid wasting a terrific opportunity.

The present situation owes much to the uneasy relationship that exists between certain sections of the French community and Brussels. Big cities, where business activity and wealth is concentrated, are not eligible for EU regional development aid. Instead it is distributed among armies of general councillors, mayors, intercommunal syndicates, small businessmen, farmers, artisans and co-operatives — in other words to the people who are the very fabric of the new Europe.

Their behaviour shows that they are so scared of the EU they cannot bring themselves to take the money Brussels has so generously offered them — an astonishing attitude on the part of people who are always the first to complain that they have been left penniless in their rural backwaters. It is almost as if they regard those "funny ecus" as dirty money.

Indeed there appears to be a serious misunderstanding between a still parochial France and the now "frontierless" Europe. The EU, which is perceived as yet another inconvenience, a jungle of bureaucracy and a machine for churning out Euro-standards (which admittedly it is), seems unable to capture the hearts and minds of its citizens.

Yet the bulk of the money the EU coughs up daily — 80 per cent of its budget goes towards aid for farmers and to the regions — is spent directly on regional development. No project has any chance of getting off the ground unless it is co-financed by Brussels, and without the commitment of macro-Europe there would be virtually no more micro-projects at local level.

It is that paradox which France's regions appear to find hard to understand. They might find it easier to do so if it could be proved to them that Europe is not a faceless and technocratic management board, but their new neighbouring — and neighbourly — village.

(October 21)



Experts are helping to change the face of African agriculture, writes **Philippe Bernard** in Bagadadji

Rice women set the pace in Senegal

NGUYEN Duc Tao chuckled, suddenly baring two huge rows of teeth: "I love Senegal. The farmers here like me too — they call me Mustapha." He proudly surveyed an expanse of bright-green land that stood out against the ochre of the surrounding landscape and the muddy Gambia river.

In just a few weeks' time, more than a year of hard work by the residents of Bagadadji will culminate in their first big rice harvest. It will mark a memorable victory over the malnutrition that has long been endemic in this village of 500 inhabitants in the heart of Casamance, a southern region of Senegal hemmed in by Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

Until "Monsieur Tao" and other Vietnamese agronomists appeared on the scene in June 1997, the flood plain of Bagadadji was nothing but a jumble of paddyfields on which the women of the village managed to grow a few meagre quintals of rice a year.

Their laid-back menfolk tilled scanty plots of millet and scorned the mosquito-infested paddyfields. In this part of Senegal rice-growing has always been an exclusively female responsibility.

In recent years rice has become the favourite food of the Senegalese, supplanting traditional cereals such as millet and sorghum. The verdant region of Casamance is one of the few places where it can be grown at a reasonable cost. Senegal imports two-thirds of the rice it consumes from countries such as Thailand, China and Vietnam, at prices lower than the cost of growing the cereal at home.

The agreement signed by Vietnam, Senegal and the Food and Agriculture Organisation in 1997 is one of a multitude of programmes implemented in 24 Third World countries by the FAO as part of its special programme for food security. The plan aims to halve the number of people suffering from malnutrition by 2015. This year the FAO has chosen to highlight the key role played by women in agriculture. It says that women produce 60-80 per cent of basic foodstuffs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Hanoi sent 83 farming experts to Senegal. While there are certainly ulterior motives behind this example of South-South co-operation, Vietnam has a good brand image in the eyes of the Senegalese: forced to import rice after its war with the United States, it has become a major rice-exporting country. Vietnamese agronomists not only cost less than their Western counterparts, but are also prepared to "rough it" with the poor.

"One day Senegal too will export rice," says the optimistic Tao, who trained as a vet. "It will take 10 years to change people's attitudes, always supposing there is financial support."

The success of the bare-footed Vietnamese agronomists can be put down to their strong motivation and close involvement on the ground, as well as quick results produced by their considerable rice-growing expertise. They share the everyday lives of farmers, accepting two years of communal and celibate life in homes whose rustic simplicity, not to say squalor, would put off most Western aid workers.

The Vietnamese experts have already successfully badgered the men of the village to help the women build a small cement dam that will protect the paddyfields when the Gambia river overflows its banks, and to construct dikes that will retain rainwater over an area of 15 hectares.

The FAO, which finances half of the $600 that the Vietnamese receive each month, has also paid for seeds and fertiliser in the first year of operation. But the scheme is supposed to pay for itself from now on — which may be difficult.

Some plots have already been starved of fertiliser because farmers do not have access to loans, and because aid promised by the Senegalese government has been slow to materialise.

"Thanks to the Vietnamese we've been able to triple the rice-growing area," says Lao Diao, the village women's dynamic leader. "We women believe in the project, but we're tired. Our millet mill has broken down, and our children keep on falling ill. If we get just a little more support we'll be able to mend the mill, buy a field pharmacy and at last produce enough for us to eat as much as we want."

The village schoolteacher, Samba Baldé, sees the side-effects of food shortages every day: "From January on, people run out of grain, and children get only one meal a day, at midday — millet cooked in peanut oil. They don't listen to me during morning classes because they've got empty stomachs. A lot of them go scouting around for food instead of attending school. Very few pupils go on into secondary education."

But things are changing gradually. Now that yields have been quadrupled on the demonstration plot, the men of Bagadadji view the flood plain in a different light. And the advisers from Vietnam have obviously become popular, even though they do not mince their words.

They are hard task-masters: "We teach the villagers to get up in the morning and go to work on time, and to give priority to rice-growing," says Fam Quoc Lam, an irrigation expert. "When they ask for a rest because it's too hot, I urge them to keep going if the dike hasn't been completed, otherwise it crumbles and they have to start all over again.

"When someone dies in the village, everyone stops working for three days. That won't do. If they don't keep to their schedule, weeds get the upper hand and that's the end of the rice crop."

That kind of tough talking might not go down too well coming from an aid worker sent by one of the former colonial powers.

"Unfortunately it's still often the case that women work while men sit around nattering," says a civil servant.

When Gabriel Sidy Diouf, prefect of the Koldà département, addressed the men of Bagadadji, he said: "Your wives are exhausted. They spend the whole day working, and when night falls, you take them into your beds. You men should roll up your sleeves and get down to the paddyfields."


ILLUSTRATION: DOLCE

But the Vietnamese agronomists accept that this reluctance to work can be explained by rampant dysentery and malaria, and by fatigue resulting from hunger and the lack of electricity or running water. As the Africans say: "An empty sack won't stand up."

There are fears that the scheme may not be able to continue once the Vietnamese go next year. Sheikh Christophe Gueye, head of the FAO's special programme in Senegal, says every precaution has been taken thanks to a "participative principle", which rules out the hiring of outside technicians and relies on the direct transfer to the local population of straightforward techniques along with the "mobilisation of all local skills".

A FEW hundred kilometres away, at the eastern end of Senegal, Maïmouna Diallo, leader of the Peul women in the village of Mako, is also torn between anxiety and hope. "When a child cries and I don't have a grain of rice, it makes me sick," she says. But she is pinning her hopes on some new hen coops built with the help of Cao Dac Dam, known as "the colonel", a Vietnam war veteran who is an expert on poultry farming.

Up to now, chickens mouldered away in dark cages or wandered round the village, at risk from cats, snakes and disease. Ten vaccinated chickens have been donated to 20 families. They can move freely around huge, well-ventilated cages and are fed on a "modern" feed, including vitamin-rich sweet-potato leaves.

Pedigree cockerels have enabled poultry farming to get off the ground, thanks once again to the efforts of the village women, who are also being taught how to read and write. Seven mini-projects of this kind have been financed in Senegal by donations from "Telefood", a FAO-sponsored television event organised in Rome in 1997, which was followed up by a concert in October in Dakar.

In Kabatekenda, near the Guinean border, women have once again been the driving force in a scheme to improve farming techniques with the help of Vietnamese expertise. Forty-three women, helped by a few young men, cleared half a hectare of bush. Now the red soil is covered with a green carpet of sweet potatoes. A pedal-operated pump brings water up from the river to the fields. Small Vietnamese melons rub shoulders with okra, chillies, tomatoes and bitter aubergines.

Local eating habits have been revolutionised by this market gardening scheme, which is supervised by Le Nguyen Hung, a young Vietnamese horticulturist.

Some of the produce is sold at a local market, but sales are restricted because suitable vehicles and good roads are lacking. Income from the crops is collectively managed and will help finance the acquisition of a millet mill. But Hung has noticed that there have been problems over how the income should be shared out, and is worried about the way the villagers organise their working day and about their lack of professionalism.

"The men have realised that their work has been productive," says Fanta Sadiakhou, the Bambara women's leader in Kabatekenda. "But they must keep at it, because we need them."

She describes a typical African woman's working day: she gets up at 6am, cooks rice for her family of 10, fetches water — five return journeys to the river, totalling 1.5km, with a bowl on her head and, sometimes, a baby clinging to her back — gathers firewood for cooking, peels, pounds and washes sorghum, works in the fields, "depending on the decision of the head of the family", cooks lunch, washes up and washes clothes in the river, and then returns to the fields until suppertime.

"If a man has several wives, only the wife who is on duty does all that. If he has only one wife, then that's her job every day."

(October 20)

Bad drivers get a lesson in etiquette

Philippe Pons in Tokyo

IT ALL began in a typically Japanese atmosphere of politeness and discipline. Sixty of us marched four abreast into a classroom at 8am. Our teacher reminded us that we were at a road-safety school and that "those who do not keep to the rules will be ejected".

"If you're caught napping more than once, you'll have to leave the room," he went on. "This training session is optional. But if you prefer not to attend it, your driving licence will be suspended."

The lesson began: "Sit up straight, as though you were at the wheel of a car, and don't stick your legs out into the aisle." We had to fill in forms (recognised driving offences, state of health, and persons to contact should we be taken ill during the course). Forty-five minutes elapsed. Some people began yawning.

Another form was handed out. "Do you like driving? Do you get angry? Do you respect pedestrians' priority?" Another 45 minutes passed. "Fold up the form and insert it into the first one. You must be tired. We'll take a break."

We then moved on to the actual lesson. "Accidents are rarely caused by the state of the road, and almost always by the driver's carelessness." "There are three kinds of responsibility following an accident: penal, administrative and civil." "Repeat . . ."

After lunch, a lecture was given on how to start a car with automatic transmission, and another on the rules of priority. This was followed by another questionnaire.

While the teacher was correcting our papers, a film on traffic accidents was shown. The lights came on again, and a man who had fallen asleep awoke with a start: "Ah, it's finished. Can we go now?"

The teacher at last ventured a smile and told us we had all passed the exam. Our driving licences were returned to us. The highway code "re-education" session had lasted six hours.

In Japan, being fined is only one element of the process of atoning for the offence. You are required to recognise the offence, to apologise for having disrupted the social order, and above all to show contrition. The re-education classes are a manifestation of that social moral code.

Under new traffic laws that came into force in October, the act of contrition consists either of a lesson of the kind just described, or of "civic actions". These might require you to spend a couple of hours picking up cigarette ends in the street, sweeping up snow, or helping old people to cross the road.

(October 14)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

The Washington Post

Netanyahu and Arafat Sign Up for Peace

Barton Gellman

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat signed an interim accord last week that committed them afresh to exchange land and power for concrete steps to secure Israel from political violence. They agreed to commence in earnest the final stage of talks to resolve their national dispute.

The accord cemented Netanyahu's commitment to territorial compromise with the Palestinians, a concept to which he led the opposition in Israel until his election as premier in 1996. On Arafat's part, it marked a new willingness to subject Palestinians to close verification of painful promises they have made before and failed to keep.

For President Clinton, who hosted a nine-day summit that represented by far the deepest diplomatic investment of his presidency, the White House signing ceremony represented a major political and foreign policy victory at a time when he needed one badly.

The summit had nearly ended in failure twice, with a walkout threat by Netanyahu and a rancorous standoff between the United States and Israel over the fate of Jonathan Jay Pollard, the Navy analyst sentenced to life imprisonment 12 years ago for spying for Israel. After Clinton told Netanyahu that he would not commit to freeing the convicted spy, the Israeli leader refused to depart the Wye River conference center for a White House signing ceremony scheduled for noon. Netanyahu's delegation put out word that Pollard in fact would be released.

Clinton's spokesmen, using uncommonly undiplomatic language, described the president as "surprised and disappointed" by "inaccurate and false" Israeli claims, and officials speaking on condition of anonymity predicted lasting damage in an already prickly relationship. At the signing ceremony some hours later, marked by great apparent warmth and mutual praise, Clinton made a point of volunteering: "With respect to Mr. Pollard, I have agreed to review this matter seriously at the prime minister's request. I have made no commitment as to the outcome."

Bridging the divide . . . King Hussein of Jordan and President Clinton oversee the symbolic handshake between Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu PHOTOGRAPH: RICK WILKING

With the latest accord, Israel and the Palestinians reached the midpoint of the road to peace they laid out in their path-breaking Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993, and a follow-up accord of September 1995. But they saved the hardest issues for last — whether and within what borders the Palestinians will have a state, the status of Jerusalem, the division of water resources and the fate of West Bank Jewish settlements and the Palestinian refugees from decades of Israeli-Arab wars.

They have not begun to negotiate on those "permanent status" questions, and the five-year period of partial self-rule is set to expire on May 4.

The text of the accord, which closely followed an American proposal briefed orally to the parties last January, included few new obligations on either side but is more specific than previous agreements on vital details. By design, it lays out a sequence of reciprocal moves because strong mutual distrust has halted performance of most obligations by either side since Israel broke ground on Har Homa, a new Jewish neighborhood in East Jerusalem, in March 1997.

In three phased stages over 12 weeks, Israel agreed to add 13 percent of the West Bank to existing areas of partial Palestinian self-rule, where Israel retains control over security but Palestinians manage their own civil affairs. That will put 40 percent in partial or full Palestinian control as the final stage of negotiations begins. As importantly for Palestinians, the accord will increase their exclusive jurisdiction — covering security as well as civil affairs — beyond the seven Arab cities they rule today, covering roughly 3 percent of the West Bank's territory, to surrounding villages encompassing another 15 percent of the land.

Israel also promised to release 750 prisoners from its jails — none involved directly in political killings — and to allow the opening of an airport in the Gaza Strip, two secure land routes between the West Bank and Gaza and an industrial zone on the border between Gaza and Israel. A seaport in Gaza, equally overdue under previous accords, has been put off.

During the same period, in a sequence tied to the withdrawal of Israel's army, the Palestinians agreed to formal revocation of 26 anti-Israel paragraphs from their national charter, a step announced in April 1996 but considered incomplete by Israel. The final consent to the changes will come in about six weeks in what promises to be an extraordinary spectacle in Gaza, with Clinton addressing a gathering of hundreds of Palestinian leaders, including former terrorists such as Mohammed Abul Abbas and the chiefs of factions based in Syria that still reject the peace negotiated by Arafat.

Arafat also agreed — under provisions calling for verification by the Central Intelligence Agency — to arrest and confine 30 suspects wanted for murder by Israel, to fire 10,000 of his 40,000 police in compliance with force limits, to provide a complete roster of his security forces to Israel to allow screening for alleged terrorists, to seize unlawful firearms and to provide detailed intelligence sharing to Israeli security services.

Netanyahu, who once took months to decide to shake Arafat's hand, did so warmly three times in the signing ceremony. Embracing a pact to carry out the September 1995 interim accord he had often described as a threat to the very existence of Israel, he spoke of "our Palestinian partners" and said "today is a day when Israel and our entire region are more secure."

Arafat allowed himself a brief complaint that "whatever we achieved is only temporary and has been late." But he joined Netanyahu in optimism that "the peace process is going ahead."

Jordan's King Hussein, who left his sickbed at the Mayo Clinic to exhort Arafat and Netanyahu to close the deal, made his first public display of the ravages of his chemotherapy for non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Bald and gaunt, he smiled and said, "if I had an ounce of strength, I would have done my utmost to be there and to help in any way I can."

Kosovo Rebels Prepared for Further Bloodshed

R. Jeffrey Smith in Drenica

SEATED cross-legged on a mattress in a simple stone house, the commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) for this area pulled some maps closer and used a pen to mark the locations of nearby concentrations of Yugoslav military forces. He pinpointed a total of nine towns to the north, five to the west, five to the east and two to the south.

Suleman Selimi, a tall, 27-year-old dressed in simple black fatigues with an automatic pistol on his belt, has seen cataclysmic change in the rolling green terrain of central Kosovo since he was appointed to his command in April. At that time, the KLA controlled nearly half of the province and was signing up dozens of eager young recruits each day.

Hundreds of government tanks subsequently rolled through the region in a late-summer offensive that displaced nearly 100,000 civilians and left dozens of ethnic Albanian villages in ruin. Now much of the high ground is in government hands, and "there are so many checkpoints . . . it's hard to move," Selimi said.

But Selimi and his colleagues are not preparing for peace. They say they are reorganizing and consolidating their forces — which may number no more than 1,000 — and have mapped out a strategy for intensified guerrilla warfare, which they say will begin soon if the Yugoslav government does not comply with a NATO demand for the withdrawal of thousands of additional troops from Kosovo.

"Even though we are isolated, we have our reserves," Selimi said. "We have many places where we could destroy their forces" if the Serbs fail to comply and a loosely observed period of "self-restraint" by the guerrillas is formally terminated. He adds that he would prefer to resolve the conflict over Kosovo's future legal status peacefully, and that he expects the war will end at the bargaining table.

But Selimi and two other senior KLA commanders — Rexhep Selimi, no relation to Suleman, the head of the operations department at the group's military headquarters, and Sokol Bashota, one of its top political officers — as well as the group's top political spokesman, Adem Demaci, all say they expect further violence because, in their estimation, the Serb-run government of Yugoslavia is still unprepared to give them what they want.

Although the group has not publicized its views, what they want is less than what they had demanded during their summer heyday. Then the guerrillas, reflecting a broad sentiment among the ethnic Albanians who compose at least 90 percent of the population of Kosovo, said they wanted immediate independence from Serbia, Yugoslavia's dominant republic.

But the military setbacks experienced by the rebel group in the past four months — as well as the opposition of Western powers to Kosovo's independence — have led its leaders to adopt a more flexible stance that would put off the achievement of that goal.

The essence of the group's current position is that the Yugoslav government must agree to fix the date at which the population of Kosovo can achieve "self-determination" — in short, to decide on the timing of a popular referendum or some other means by which they would determine their eventual political fate. The timing of this decision is negotiable, as are the details of an interim political arrangement; the only important thing is to fix the date now, they say. The Yugoslav government repeatedly has refused to approve of such a referendum.

In this strange interregnum between conflict and peace, both sides have reason to exaggerate the KLA's strength. But Bashota said he thinks that it still has 1,000 armed members after experiencing dozens of deaths and hundreds of defections during the summer. That is well below Western estimates in June of anywhere between 2,000 and 10,000 guerrilla fighters.

Zoran Andjelkovic, recently appointed by the government as president of an interim governing council for Kosovo, said in an interview that recent intelligence estimates the KLA is still large enough to control 306 villages and two towns with a total population of 248,000 people.

Many other areas in Kosovo that once were under rebel control are now dotted with police bunkers, spaced as closely as every mile on some roads. But most of these are unheated lean-tos, with tarpaulins and sandbags for walls, manned by Interior Ministry troops who earn $50 a month and whose eyes readily betray their fear.

If the cease-fire ends, the KLA's strategy will be "to break the morale of the Serb forces . . . to make them uncomfortable and insecure," initially by attacking policemen at isolated outposts and larger units at moments "when they are not ready and not expecting us," Bashota said. One rebel officer suggested that the group might further refine its strategy by targeting senior Serbian officers or Serbian policemen in major cities for the first time.

"If the international community and NATO do not take measures, we will fight with our own forces," said Rexhep Selimi, a former student activist. Demaci, an activist who was imprisoned for years by Belgrade, said that since the government has shown no sign of willingness to accept the proposal for a referendum — an idea also backed in recent weeks by ethnic Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova — "it seems likely that there will be a fight."



GUARDIAN WEEKLY November 1 1998

Pinochet Is Victim Of Rank Hypocrisy

OPINION
Charles Krauthammer

THE detention in London of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet on a human rights arrest warrant from Spain is being treated in all correct-thinking precincts — with the significant exception of the democratically elected government of Chile — as a blow for justice. In fact, it is a blow for the most ideologically selective justice, and for the rankest hypocrisy.

Pinochet, of course, has blood on his hands from 17 years of iron rule before he gave way to a transition to democracy. But while Pinochet's detention is cheered, Jiang Zemin and the butchers of Tiananmen Square, who killed thousands in a week and continue to torture and imprison, are feted at the highest levels everywhere; Fidel Castro, whose 40 years of iron rule have featured torture, execution, quarantining homosexuals, and no transition to democracy, is wined and dined at a summit of Hispanic leaders in Portugal on the very day Pinochet is arrested; and Yasser Arafat, whose "guerrillas" killed hundreds of innocents, and in particular murdered U.S. Ambassador to Sudan Cleo Noel and his deputy George Moore in the same year Pinochet overthrew Salvador Allende, is warmly received by the president, vice president and secretary of state of the very country Noel and Moore served.

What is the lesson of Pinochet's arrest? It is not that dictators with blood on their hands will now think twice for fear of being apprehended by the human rights police. It is that dictators with blood on their hands will not give up power voluntarily, as did Pinochet, seeing as those who don't can travel the world with impunity.

It is not as if Pinochet escaped clandestinely, Eichmann-style, to refuge in London. Chile had negotiated a remarkable transition to democracy that included a truth commission, limited amnesty, and one of the most successful national reconciliations in history. Pinochet's amnesty was part of the deal. Which is why a furious President Eduardo Frei wants him released and returned home.

That apparently is not good enough for the publicity-seeking prosecutors of Spain. Spain? Having left on the South American continent a record of murder, torture and enslavement that still staggers the imagination, Spain will now instruct Chile on political morality.

Ancient history, you say? OK. But Franco is not. And after Franco, Spain went through a transition to democracy that did not go half the distance Chile did in righting the wrongs of the past. There was no truth commission, no national soul-searching, no convictions for crimes committed: blanket amnesty.

Spain decreed amnesia. Does anyone fault Spain for having thus found its way to democracy? No. Turning a blind eye on the past was necessary for the sake of social peace.

Well, Chile found its way too. It not only found its way; it led the way. Its transition from authoritarianism to democracy — with its truth commission and public investigations of past crimes — became the model for the world, copied by new democracies from El Salvador to South Africa.

Is Nelson Mandela a coward then, as is implied of Chile's Frei, for not horsewhipping ex-president De Klerk, who presided over an apartheid regime that left countless dead and tortured? Of course not. The rule of thumb is very simple. When you win total victory over an evil regime, as we did over the Nazis and the Japanese in World War II, you can — and should — hold trials to vindicate right.

But reality does not always permit right to be fully vindicated. In places like Chile and South Africa and El Salvador where no one side wins, perfect justice is not achieved. One instead gets truth, peace, democracy and progress. And that requires some kind of amnesty.

Oceans away, in the post-colonial capitals not just of England and Spain but of the United States, armchair moralists seethe at such compromises. Craving the balm of easy justice, they invoke international law.

Rubbish. This is not a blow for international law, which stands mocked daily everywhere from Kosovo to Iraq.

This is but an opportunity for the European left, which has lost every major political argument — about development in the Third World, about the economics of poverty, about the nature of communism, about the merits of capitalism — to give itself a little consolation prize.

Some prize. Next, they grab De Klerk while he's having bridgework done in Paris.


Missing . . . Protesters outside the London clinic where General Pinochet is being held PHOTO: ALASTAIR GRANT

Rebel Gains Force Kabila to Escalate Congo Conflict

Lynne Duke in Goma, Congo

WITH Congolese rebels pressing their offensive, President Laurent Kabila and at least one of his key allies are pouring more troops and weaponry into the battle zone in a further escalation of a conflict that now involves up to a dozen combatants from as many as nine countries.

After seizing Kabila's forward eastern base at Kindu last month rebels claim they now are pressing close to Mbuji Mayi, the diamond mining center and key south-central crossroads about 450 miles east of the capital city, Kinshasa.

Bizima Karaha, a former foreign minister in Kabila's government who now conducts foreign affairs for the rebels, said the turning point in the three-month-old war occurred at Kindu, because Kabila had touted Kindu as his launching pad for a sweeping counteroffensive, and then lost it. "The military war is over," he said.

But Kabila and his allies — who include Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia — are amassing weapons, fighter planes and troops around Mbuji Mayi, raising the prospect of an intense battle or a protracted standoff.

Following the defeat at Kindu, Kabila's key ally, Zimbabwe, announced a redoubling of its military assistance. Zimbabwe reportedly has begun to move new troops and equipment into Congo, joining the 3,000 troops and military equipment dispatched by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in August.

As troubling as this escalation is to Africa's would-be peacemakers, equally disturbing is the involvement of numerous regional rebel forces — many of them brutally repressive — have thrown their weight behind Kabila or are fighting his same enemies.

These rebel groups are from Congo, Uganda and Burundi and include former ethnic Rwandan Hutu army and militiamen, known as the Interahamwe — "those who work together" — who carried out the 1994 slaughter of more than 500,000 Rwandan Tutsi. Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, president of the anti-Kabila rebel movement, the Congolese Rally for Democracy, said that rebel intelligence sources claim Kabila now has deployed thousands of Interahamwe fighters to help defend his shrinking turf.

As hostilities escalate, an array of diplomatic initiatives are under way. Starting last weekend, talks are to take place among a variety of the warring parties, first in Zambia, then in South Africa. But numerous earlier peace efforts have failed, with Kabila insisting he will not talk directly to the rebels, who he sees as proxies for the regional aims of Rwanda and Uganda. The rebels, however, say they are open to negotiations.

"What we want is a political victory," said Wamba, the rebel leader. "But if he insists on having a military victory, we will fight on."

In Brief

A SNIPER wielding a high-powered rifle shot and killed a well-known abortion doctor last week just days after U.S. and Canadian police warned of such an attack, citing four previous shootings against abortion doctors at this time of year in Canada and upstate New York.

Barnett Slepian, 52, was killed by a single shot fired through a window as he stood in the kitchen of his home in a suburb of Buffalo, New York. Slepian, for years a defiant target of antiabortion protesters, had just returned from a synagogue with his wife and four sons.

The murder bore eerie similarities to a series of sniper attacks that have wounded four abortion doctors in the border region over the past four years. In each case, the doctors were fired on with high-powered rifles through the windows of their homes at approximately this time of year.

DIESEL engine manufacturers last week agreed to pay $83 million in fines and spend $1 billion on environmental improvements to avoid a federal lawsuit over alleged cheating on engine performance tests.

The landmark deal, the most expensive settlement of an air pollution case, will hasten the implementation of tough pollution controls for the world's top manufacturers of truck and bus engines, while substantially improving air quality for millions of Americans, federal officials said.

In sheer size, the settlement rivals the criminal penalties imposed in the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill that resulted in $125 million in fines and restitution and $900 million for the environmental cleanup.

"The diesel engine industry has illegally poured millions of tons of pollution into the air," said Attorney General Janet Reno. "It's time for the industry to clean up its act — and clean up our air."

The agreement ends a year of negotiations over whether seven U.S. and foreign diesel companies deliberately tried to thwart federal pollution controls with their engine designs. Government lawyers accused the manufacturers of using "defeat devices" that enabled engines to pass federal vehicle emissions tests even though they belched prodigious amounts of sooty fumes at highway speeds.

Because of the devices, the EPA alleged, diesels spewed an additional 1.3 million tons of smog-causing nitrogen oxide into the air last year alone.

A FORMER Pentagon lawyer and her labor organizer husband were convicted last week of spying for East Germany, after a fellow spy testified for the prosecution and a federal jury rejected arguments that they had been unfairly entrapped in an FBI sting.

The six-man, six-woman jury in Alexandria, Virginia, deliberated for 12 hours over three days before finding that Theresa Maria Squillacote and Kurt Alan Stand were part of a two-decade conspiracy to send classified information to East Germany and later sought to spy for Russia.

Jurors also found that the former campus radicals, who lived in the District of Columbia's Brookland neighborhood, were attempting to spy when Squillacote, aged 40, handed classified Pentagon documents to an FBI agent posing as a South African agent.

The defendants face a maximum of life in prison when they are sentenced in January. They also were convicted of a lesser count of obtaining national defense information, and Squillacote was found guilty of making false statements.

A 24-YEAR-OLD woman who has been in a coma for the last five years gave birth to a premature baby girl last week, several months after she was apparently raped while in the care of a Massachusetts nursing home.

Police and state health officials have begun an investigation into the alleged sexual assault, which an informed official said is believed to have occurred about five months ago at a long-term care facility in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 30 miles north of Boston. The unidentified woman was taken to Lawrence General Hospital after she went into labor, and her legal guardians were notified.

Her child was flown to the neonatal intensive care unit at the New England Medical Center in Boston.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY November 1 1998

Polish Farms Face Being Plowed Under

Peter Finn in Stefanow

CANTERING along a narrow country road in his horse and cart, Bogdan Frydrych is looking forward to his lunch of sour cucumber soup, potatoes with fried eggs and mugs of milk — all produce from his eight-acre farm of scattered fields.

Frydrych, his wife, Janina, and son, Jerzy, 38, have spent the morning preparing one field for rye, plowing it by hand behind the horse that is now taking them home.

Except for the cars whizzing by and the incongruous baseball hat on Frydrych's head, this snapshot of Polish life has no anchor in time. The Frydrych family has worked these fields and traveled these roads in an unchanging seasonal rhythm for close to two centuries. But for Bogdan Frydrych, that tradition is dying. He fears that Jerzy's two teenage boys will never till the land that has been handed down through generations.

If Poland, as expected, enters the European Union early in the next century, its huge but inefficient agricultural sector is likely to experience a profound and painful transformation. A peasantry that bested communism by successfully resisting the forced collectivization of its land in the 1950s is now facing a far stiffer challenge: modern, industrial farming. And the winds of change are likely to blow farmers like Frydrych into extinction.

"I think there will just be bigger and bigger farms in this village," said Frydrych, whose home here is about 20 miles east of Radom in southern Poland. "The young ones don't have any future on this land."

The basic problem in Polish agriculture is easily stated: There are too many people working on farms that are too small, producing next to nothing that is easily sold to market.

Today, 27 percent of Poland's work force — 3.8 million people — work on 2 million farms, whose average size is about 14 acres. In Germany, 3.2 percent of its citizens work on farms, and in France the total is 4.9 percent. In the United Kingdom, by comparison, 2 percent of the work force is in agriculture. And the Polish farming sector, despite the size of its labor force, accounts for a paltry 6 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

To become competitive, specialists say, Poland must clear hundreds of thousands of people off the land and consolidate agriculture into larger farms. The EU, already trying to scale back massive agricultural programs that soak up half its budget, appears unwilling to underwrite Polish farmers with the subsidies EU farmers currently enjoy. And Brussels is likely to insist on reform in advance of Poland's entry into the union.

Of Poland's 2 million farms, officials estimate, only 160,000 are ready now to compete in Europe. Accession talks on the thorny issue of how Poland can be integrated into the EU's agricultural programs — probably the biggest challenge of the union's eastward expansion — are about to begin.

For the small farmers of this region, the prospect of restructuring looms like distant thunder. "The mood is pretty low," said Ewa Nowac, 45, one of Frydrych's neighbors, whose five acres support a family of six. "People are afraid of the European Union. On the television they talk about how the small farms have to go. We know that they're talking about us."

Even in the cities there is a heightened sense of irony about the calls for a revolution in agriculture. Collectivization, after all, was about creating large, state-run farms; entry into the EU is about creating large, private farms. Either way, the peasant is in the firing line.

"I remember the Bulgarians and others coming here and telling us we weren't moving fast enough to collectivize," said Augustyn Wos, a professor of agriculture at the Warsaw-based Institute for Agriculture and Food Economics. "Now we have the EU telling us we need larger farms. We do, of course, but some of the farmers hear an echo."

"It began with Walesa," said Zofia Makuch, 59, a farmer here, referring to former president Lech Walesa, who led the Solidarity movement that helped bring about the end of communist rule in Poland. "We used to have pigs, but you can't get anything for them anymore. The price for pigs keeps going down and the price of sausage keeps going up. It doesn't make any sense. "At least the communists would buy everything at good prices," she snorted.

On the Makuch farm here, six people, in three generations, live on 15 acres generating about $1,000 annually from rye, wheat, potatoes and strawberries. The family eats its own milk, eggs and vegetables. In reality, the Makuchs are living off Edward Makuch's monthly pension of $140 — and borrowed time.

"We can't get a good price for anything we do," said Edward Makuch, 68. With prices so low, he said, they have no money to invest in seed or fertilizer, and they are beginning to leave land idle. What little there is to do, Makuch said, could probably be handled by any one of the four adults on the farm.

Indeed, the agriculture and food institute estimates that 1.7 million people could be removed from the country's farms immediately with no effect on the productivity of agriculture.

"The crucial point is to modernize and to reduce the number of people employed in agriculture," Wos said. "That's easy to say. What's enormously difficult is what to do with all these people."

For historical reasons, the challenges facing Polish agriculture are more pronounced than elsewhere in eastern and central Europe. The communist drive to collectivize land collapsed here in 1956, and only 20 percent of arable land was taken over. By contrast, much of agriculture in Czechoslovakia and Hungary was collectivized. With the collapse of communism in 1989, farms were privatized in large units and today only 5 percent of the Czech and 7 percent of the Hungarian work forces are employed in agriculture.

"Our historical roots, our cultural roots are in the countryside, not in the towns," said Andrzej Stelmachowski, a professor of agricultural law at Warsaw University. "We do not want an empty countryside. We must be very careful not to lose values which are precious to our national development."

The countryside is emptying — but at its own pace. Between 1988 and 1996, the number of farms decreased by 126,000, and some Poles argue that the number will continue to decrease naturally in line with the country's general economic development.

Wos, the institute professor, said current trends suggest farms are not consolidating quickly enough to develop a competitive, modern agricultural sector in time for Poland's entry into the EU. But, he notes, the slow pace may be necessary. A more rapid decrease would likely cause social unrest because there is very little job creation in small rural towns. And, he said, there are precious few government initiatives to spearhead development in the countryside.

Frydrych's son, Jerzy, for instance, has been looking for a job off the land for five years without success. He would prefer, he said, not to be dependent on his father's farm, where his labor is welcome but not really needed. But he sees no way out. "I think my sons will go to the city," he said, "but I will stay here."

The Frydrych family head home for lunch after a morning of plowing the fields PHOTOGRAPH: PETER FINN

Conglomerates Stall Japan's Recovery

Sandra Sugawara in Tokyo

NOT SO long ago, when Japanese companies were steamrolling into America, muscling aside U.S. car companies, winning huge banking deals and buying up Hollywood, the *keiretsu* was viewed as Japan Inc.'s powerful secret weapon.

The keiretsu groups were an awesome sight — industrial and trading powerhouses clustered around core mega-banks, all cooperating with one another and wreaking havoc on their U.S. competitors. They looked invincible, bound together by stock holdings, cozy relationships among top officials and preferential business deals.

Now the keiretsu system is a nightmare for those desperate for Japan to reinvigorate its economy and help fend off a worldwide slowdown. The keiretsu ties that bind can also strangle: The culture of mutual protection makes it hard for strong companies to break free and grow, and forces weak companies to bail out even weaker ones.

"Japan is like a big pond. It has plugged all the outlets — that is, it has blocked all attempts to restructure," said James McGinnis, a Tokyo-based banking analyst with Dresdner Kleinwort Benson. "So the pond is stagnating, and even the strongest fish in the pond have started to suffocate."

It is the keiretsu system that helps make it almost impossible to reform Japan's banks. The keiretsu economy is organized on the concept of business groups anchored by a major bank. Thus, the survival of its largest banks is central to the survival of the keiretsu groups. That's one reason why analysts remain skeptical that Japan's plan to inject more than $500 billion into its banking system will bring about major reforms or economic growth.

Efforts to close weak banks, cut off shaky borrowers and boost the stronger ones could be a serious threat to keiretsu members. Some of the weak banks might be the main banks of major business groups. Some shaky borrowers appear to be core keiretsu members that the bank has pledged to support. In an environment where financial disclosure is weak, business executives look to the guarantee of a company's main bank to judge a company's dependability.

"If the confidence in a group's main banks is shaky, the confidence in the companies who use the banks as their main banks gets affected," said Rinichi Kozaki, an economic consultant.

So it is that banks like Fuji Bank and Sakura Bank insist they will not take any public funds, despite struggling with massive levels of bad debts. Instead, the financially ailing Fuyo group keiretsu is trying to bail out its Fuji Bank, and the struggling Mitsui group is trying to bail out its Sakura Bank. Many of the companies being asked to ante up are themselves losing money. But analysts here said the companies believe the alternative — no group bank — is worse.

The Fuyo group companies "couldn't afford to let Fuji Bank fail and lose their main, nucleus bank. That may essentially cost them more. Some companies might actually have a hard time finding a new funding source," said James Fiorillo, a banking analyst with ING Barings. "The group's firms would be damaged considerably, with some of them fatally wounded."

The protracted debate in Japan over its banking bailout legislation has been a battle between Japan's unique system of business groups and efforts to force a more U.S.-style form of free markets on Japan.

For several weeks, the Democratic Party of Japan, the largest opposition group, was able to rally other opposition parties around its plan to erect a Western-style bank regulatory scheme that would force banks to confess to their problems and would only bail out banks that had a plan for becoming profitable. Such a plan would probably have forced banks to cut off support for weak keiretsu group companies.

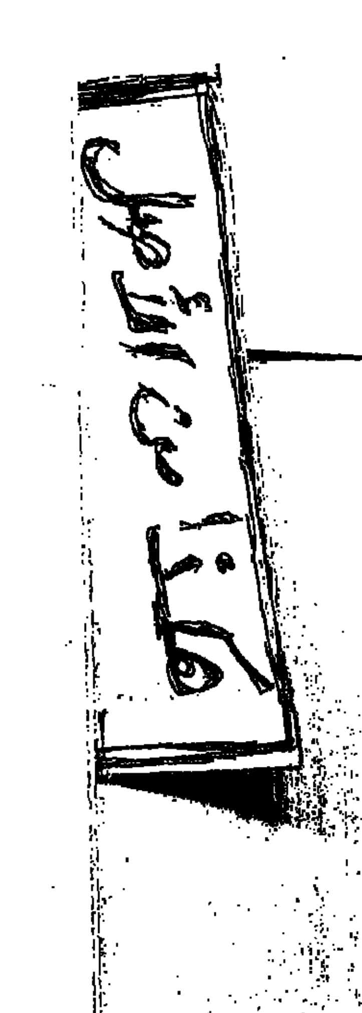
The Democratic Party said many banks might be liquidated or temporarily nationalized, possibly including those main banks of keiretsu groups. It embraced the concept of "creative destruction" whereby bankruptcies are supposed to free up funds for more profitable firms and job creation.

But ultimately other opposition groups grew uncomfortable with the potential of widespread bankruptcies and layoffs, so they decided to side with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's plan to put money into the major banks to stabilize them.

The result is that the collapse of any major banks probably has been averted, but the "creative destruction" that might have spurred the rebirth of healthy, growing companies is nowhere in sight. Kozaki said the keiretsu group system works for companies that merely want to stay alive, but "if a company really wants to grow, it has become a barrier."

The LDP and the Finance Ministry believe they have a way to update and strengthen the keiretsu system. In addition to stabilizing the main banks, they are deregulating the financial system to encourage the keiretsu companies not to break up but to meld closer together.

Mitsubishi Corp. Chairman Minoru Makihara sees this consolidation as Japan's logical response to the mega-mergers taking place in the United States and Europe. "I think due to global competition and the credit crunch, the ties will get stronger" among keiretsu, he said.



Chronicle of Evil

Jonathan Randal

WE WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT TOMORROW WE WILL BE KILLED WITH OUR FAMILIES
Stories from Rwanda
By Philip Gourevitch
Farrar Straus Giroux. 358pp. $25

PHILIP GOUREVITCH'S exacting scrutiny of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and its still-unfolding murderous aftermath is a milestone of foreign reporting and a chronicle of evil rarely rivaled since Joseph Conrad's Heart Of Darkness.

Gourevitch is not content with nailing down how and why 800,000 predominantly Tutsi Rwandans were killed by Hutu friends and neighbors, mostly with the cold steel of machetes, in fewer than 100 days or at a rate of five-and-a-half a minute. Rather, to these barely believable horrors he has added the chilling tale of the international community's cowardice, moral equivocation, downright lies and refusal to stop the initial slaughter or its bloody consequences. His compelling account should be required reading for those probing the inner workings of modern states. But the queasy and the hero-worshipers should abstain.

Kofi Annan (head of United Nations peacekeeping in 1994), France's late President François Mitterrand, President Clinton and Madeleine Albright (then U.S. ambassador to the UN) are among Gourevitch's do-nothing villains (although he partially rehabilitates the two Americans for making recent verbal amends). He also excoriates Johnny-come-lately UN and relief workers in Zaire refugee camps who initially overlooked the genocide and sympathized with the Hutu even as they carried out revenge under their noses.

Among this cautionary tale's many aspects, the most upsetting may be the premonitory words of Gourevitch's title. They were taken from a letter addressed to a Hutu Adventist pastor by seven luckless junior clerics, also Adventist but Tutsi. To Gourevitch's credit, he helped track down that Hutu pastor in Texas; this summer he was extradited to answer for leading the slaughter in his home town. The repeated implication of the clergy in the atrocities raises disquieting questions about religion's role in a minutely planned extermination that only naive foreigners dismissed as a rampage.

Gourevitch arrived in Rwanda on the first of six protracted visits only a year after the genocide. For all the meretriciousness of Tina Brown's New Yorker, she found the money and space to allow Gourevitch the opportunity to document Rwanda's travail. Much of his dogged nosing around occurred before late 1996, when Rwanda's Tutsis defeated the revanchist Hutus entrenched illegally on the border of neighboring Zaire and spearheaded the drive that overthrew Zaire's moribund President Mobutu Sese Seko.

That offensive attracted sustained media interest in Rwanda for the first time since July 1994, when the world's television cameras recorded the cholera epidemic that killed some 40,000 of the million-plus Hutus who had fled to Zaire to escape the feared Tutsi army. For weeks on end attention focused on the Hutu refugees, whose plight drew hundreds of millions of dollars in donations denied Rwanda itself. Yet Hutu extremists never hid their determination to arm the border refugee camps and launch a counterattack. In refusing to remove the border camps, the outside world signaled its spinelessness.

So it was no surprise that the Tutsi army's Maj. Gen. Kagame, faced with increasingly murderous Hutu raids, took matters into his own hands. He invaded Zaire, marched his troops virtually unopposed to Mobutu's capital and left tens of thousands of Hutu refugees and extremists slain along the way. In putting Kabila in power in Kinshasa in 1997, Kagame hoped that Rwanda's problems were over. But Kagame, the book's most fascinating character, comes across as too clever by half. Initially, he preached the virtues of reconciliation through repentance, re-education, accountability and show trials. Hutu extremists would have none of it.

Gourevitch concludes: "If Rwanda's experience could be said to carry any lessons for the world, it was that endangered peoples who depend on the international community for physical protection stand defenseless." Perhaps. Still, renewed Rwandan military intervention against Kinshasa this summer shows that Kagame still feels threatened. As this adventure seems to be turning increasingly sour, he is learning that only at their peril do regimes with understandable persecution complexes, especially minority ones, push around much bigger states, even those as debilitated as Kabila's.



A Tropical Depression

K. Alease Dilday

SONG OF NIGHT
By Glenville Lovell
Soho. 265pp. $23

SINCE women got to know each other so well during the women's movement, it's rare that a male author can write a female character well enough to convince female readers. Women have compared notes too often to believe that Lady Chatterley's earth-shaking orgasms were anything more than the product of an overconfident male imagination. But Glenville Lovell does the finest job of getting inside a woman's psyche since Roddy Doyle wrote The Woman Who Walked Into Doors. To Lovell's lithe, young heroine, Cyan Cattlewash, the game of life is a prizefight — and she connects like a heavyweight champion of the world.

In Bottom Rock, the village in Barbados where Cyan lives, life is harsh and people are frank. Bajans (Barbadians) don't have time for spare words. With typical directness, they have called Cyan "Night" since she was a child because of the darkness of her skin. And everyone in Bottom Rock knows that Cyan's father, Steel, was hanged for slitting the throat of a man he believed was having an affair with his wife. As Cyan says to Breeze, her lover, after he claims he couldn't find her house, "Everyone know where I live. All you had to do was ask for the girl who father went to the gallows."

Early in Song Of Night, Cyan encounters a man painting on the beach. The subject in his portrait so closely resembles her late father that Cyan feels she must own it. Because Cyan is penniless, the artist, Dr. Mayhem, strikes a bargain with her: If she'll come to work as his maid, he will give her the painting. Trapped in a house characterized by grief, Cyan needs to escape her mother and find an identity beyond that of a murderer's daughter, and so accepts his offer.

Cyan's father had always protected his daughter against the unreasonable fury of her mother, Obe, a strong-willed woman prone to rages so insane that she burned the fingers of Cyan's hand as punishment for an alleged theft from a neighbor. Her mother's brutal censures only intensify the battle, which typifies the war that rages between strong-willed mothers and the daughters they inevitably raise to be their fiercest match.

On Cyan's first day as the doctor's maid, she meets his American-born wife, Koko. The couple are having difficulties; when Koko moves out she and Cyan remain close friends long after Cyan leaves the doctor's employ. It is through Koko that Cyan meets Breeze, a handsome Bajan. She offers him her love with an intensity and directness that frightens him. "I ain't ever had no boyfriend. I want you to be my man," she says. Cyan goes on to elaborate the terms: "Only thing is, you can't leave me. If you leave me, you can't come back. I ain't ever go take back no man that leave me."

Breeze is a hard-working beach vendor who has built a profitable business out of supplying tourists with clothes, trinkets and, occasionally, sexual companionship. Despite his instinct to run, he accepts her terms. When Cyan spies Breeze on his motorbike with a female tourist curled around him, she ends the affair. Breeze woos her back, but Cyan is too brittle to truly forgive; if she tries to bend, she just might break. Breeze leaves her for the final time after he wakes one night to find her sleepwalking and standing over him with a knife.

But he doesn't know that she is pregnant. Motherhood provides no comfort for Cyan. Irreparably damaged by the death and betrayal of those she loves, she wants nothing to do with Breeze's child. She has reached the point where all friends begin to look like enemies. When Koko offers to arrange a profitable adoption, Cyan accepts. Heavy with child and despair, Cyan signs her unborn baby over to Amanda, an American friend of Koko's who is desperate for a child.

Lovell isn't content to merely eke out a story until its conclusion. He has crafted a novel of style as well as substance, building with exquisite process to a shattering conclusion that in retrospect seems the only one possible. Along the way he skillfully weaves several subplots into the main story, and the novel's rich but seemingly unconnected strands meet to form brilliant patterns, completing a portrait of a village straining under the weight of secret lives. This novel is a sure contender for the year's top literary honors.

The Sour Taste of Sugar in Haiti

Jacqueline Brice-Finch

THE FARMING OF BONES
By Edwidge Danticat
Soho. 312pp. $23

FOR Haitian emigrants in the cane fields of the Dominican Republic in 1937, existence was nightmarish. Generalissimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, supreme commander-in-chief and president of the republic for seven years, decreed that his countrymen had to protect themselves from outsiders or lose control of the country.

According to Haitian lore, the generalissimo devised a simple test for distinguishing Haitians from his own countrymen. As a young farmer, Trujillo pursued a Haitian worker through two fields, one wheat and the other parsley. As the worker called out the names of the fields, Trujillo noted that he failed to trill the r of *trigo* (wheat) and *perejil* (parsley) or to pronounce the latter word's jota. Later, when the generalissimo gave the order to wipe out the Haitians, his soldiers needed only to demand "*que diga perejil*." (that they pronounce perejil.) to ferret them out. In The Farming Of Bones, her second novel, Edwidge Danticat graphically retells the story of this governmental assault on Haitians from the cane worker's perspective.

Danticat's depiction of the cane cutter forever banishes the sanitized image of a worker wielding a machete, severing a cane stalk at its base and tossing the piece onto a cart. The actual cutting of the cane, which the Haitians call *kout kouto*, a stabbing, is a constant assault on human skin.

The protagonist, Amabelle Desir, a house servant on a sugar plantation, sees firsthand the ravages of the cane field. Her lover, Sebastien Onius, bears the marks. His face is a patchwork of furrowed scars. Calluses have obliterated the lifelines in his palms, and carbuncles bunch on his hips and belly. The terrain is merciless: A shortcut through a cane field means taking tiny steps in a spongy marsh so as not to stir the cane stalks or invite inspection by rats or snakes; inhaling a searing, noxious heat; and enduring slashes from the cane.

When Amabelle's employer, an officer in Trujillo's army, leads an attack on the Haitians in his district, she flees with a few compatriots across mountain paths to her homeland. While still in a border town, the group is savagely beaten by Dominican thugs while nearby an orchestra entertains the generalissimo. Describing the intensity of her pain, Amabelle says that her skin felt "as if my blood had been put in a pot to boil and then poured back into me."

During the aftermath, one victim asks, "Why don't our people go to war because of this?" A photograph of President Stenio Vincent wearing a medal from Trujillo, given as "a symbol of eternal friendship between our two peoples," provides the only insight into Vincent's failure to avenge the massacre of approximately 40,000 Haitians.

Danticat compares cane to bones which when cut sound like dry chicken bones being broken. The cane life is called *travay te pou zo*, the farming of bones. Trafficking in human bones is vital to the industry's success in the Dominican Republic, on the Spanish side of Hispaniola. The poor are an expendable commodity, especially those from Haiti, who are exported "to rid the country of their blight."

In this novel, lyrical dream sequences alternating with chronological chapters underscore the psychological damage to the characters. As she so clearly did in her first novel, Breath, Eyes, Memory and her National Book Award nominated short story collection Krik? Krak!, in The Farming of Bones Danticat portrays the resilience and fortitude of a much maligned but heroic people.

Flood of cheap imports prompts protectionist fears

Larry Elliott and Mark Atkinson

SINCE the start of the Asian crisis in the summer of 1997 global leaders from Bill Clinton to Gordon Brown have been warning against a retreat into protectionism, as a defence against the flood of cheap imports from countries experiencing currency devaluations.

While most of the attention has been focused on gyrations in financial markets, the real fear in the White House and Whitehall is of a retreat into the beggar-my-neighbour policies that are blamed for intensifying and prolonging the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Hard evidence of a backlash against free trade is still fairly scant, but there are enough signs of a return of the P-word to make policymakers anxious. Last week the United States and the European Union were at each others' throats over steel and cars. The Americans believe that the system of quotas and subsidies operated by Brussels gives European producers an unfair advantage over their US rivals, who have been through a prolonged and painful period of restructuring.

But this is not just a question of whether the EU should allow more Japanese cars into its market. It is about whether Europe is carrying its fair share of the burden when it comes to providing the world economy with an escape route from recession.

As US trade representative Charlene Barshefsky puts it, the US is not so much concerned about being the buyer of last resort for the world as being the buyer of first resort. The latest US trade figures highlight the point. The US deficit in goods and services expanded, from $14.5 billion in July to a record $16.8 billion in August — part of a startling deterioration that will have a marked impact on growth.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the US trade deficit — which already stood at a sizeable $155 billion in 1997 — is likely to expand to $236 billion this year and $290 billion in 1999. Meanwhile the EU is expected to run a hefty surplus during this period, declining only slightly, from $123 billion in 1997 to $97 billion in 1998 and $93 billion in 1999.

Not fair, say the Americans, who believe they are taking all the strain of the current account adjustments demanded as a result of the global meltdown. Unfair criticism, say the Europeans, who point to figures showing imports from Asia up 19 per cent and exports down 12 per cent.

While there is no doubt that some posturing is going on in the US before the mid-term elections on November 3, the global financial institutions believe the threat of protectionism is real.

At its annual meeting in Washington last month, the IMF director-general, Michel Camdessus, held a private meeting with Renato Ruggiero, director-general of the World Trade Organisation, and James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, to discuss burden sharing.

Mr Ruggiero said recently: "This is not the moment to turn back to the past — a past which has shown us with clarity how building barriers to one another can only make our economies poorer and our world less secure."

The past which Mr Ruggiero is talking about is the Smoot-Hawley tariff, imposed by the US Congress in 1930, which levied a 40 per cent surcharge on imports in an attempt to cushion the US economy from the downturn that followed the stock market crash of October 1929.

Economists such as Paul Krugman question whether the Smoot-Hawley tariff was actually as damaging for the US as free-traders argue, pointing out that imports at the time made up only 6 per cent of US gross national product.

Despite his misgivings, free trade is now such a part of the economic orthodoxy that virtually no government is prepared to argue that it may have been the refusal to cut interest interest rates and the tightening of fiscal policy that did the real damage.

Yet, for all the politicians' talk, protectionism is making a comeback. Only last week New Zealand meat producers complained that British supermarkets were pushing their chilled lamb out of the domestic market after lobbying from British farmers.

If the global economy continues to worsen, it may not only be free trade in New Zealand lamb that is for the chop.

● Britain's trade gap with non-EU countries rose to a record $3 billion in September. Exports to Southeast Asia are running at less than a third of their 1997 levels.

Fool's gold

John Crace on a website that could replace your need for a financial adviser

FIVE years ago David Berger, a 32-year-old Devon doctor, decided to do something about his financial future. He went to see a professional adviser but left feeling that the advice he got would benefit his consultant more than him.

In 1996 he found the financial help he needed. "An American friend told me to check out a US website called Motley Fool and I immediately realised that I had found what I was looking for. Here was advice that was clear, wittily written and impartial." Berger liked the website so much that he has now started a British version, in league with its US inventors, Tom and David Gardner.

The brothers had realised that there was an inherent conflict of interest between professional financial advisers and their clients. The advisers usually make their money through commission from the companies whose products they recommend, and even though the scale of charges is clearer than it was, it is still difficult to work out exactly how much the adviser is getting. Furthermore advisers also make their money through commissions on tradings, so they are unlikely to advocate long-term holdings. In fact, the brothers considered professional advisers to be little more than glorified salesmen.

So Tom, who five years ago was a 27-year-old teacher at the University of Montana, and Dave, aged 25, who had trained as an investment analyst, decided to write their own frivolous financial newsletter. In it they suggested that readers took responsibility for their own investments rather than leaving it all to a third party. "We borrowed a cousin's wedding list, looked through an old school list and sent out 1,500 free copies," says Tom. "By the end of the first month we had 12 subscribers." Through word of mouth and their online message board this had grown to 400 by the end of the year.

All this changed in August 1994, when they were approached by the network provider, America On Line, to create their own investment site. AOL had noticed that the Gardners' message board was by far the fullest of all those offering financial advice, and were impressed by a stunt that had caught the attention of the Wall Street Journal.

The Gardners had always warned against buying penny, or very cheap, shares, because their price can so easily be hyped. To prove the point they invented a stock, Zeigletics, which they proceeded to hype by urging their online subscribers to buy shares in a company that they said was on the verge of a breakthrough in the manufacture of portable lavatories. Thousands of people placed orders for the non-existent stock before the Gardners revealed the hoax. The Wall Street Journal ran a piece on the scam and AOL were soon in touch.

The website opened by explaining the simple mechanics of investing, how to read accounts, how to calculate the hidden costs and charges and how every quarter of a per cent saved or earned can make a huge difference when calculating interest over a period of years.

But the basic message that originally captured everyone's attention — and still does — was that even the dopiest individual could outperform the supposed professionals, as 90 per cent of the mutual funds (the US equivalent of British unit trusts) were underperforming the stock market index, which is simply an average of the biggest shares in the country. All you had to do was to put money into a fund that was designed to track the index and you would be in clover.

The Motley Fool's US website now has 750,000 hits from different visitors, many calling several times a week. "Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the site, though, has been the democratisation of financial information. Previously such sensitive information was restricted to a few people on Wall Street; now everybody's getting access," says Tom.

These days the Fools are taken extremely seriously in the US. The Gardners have a national radio show every weekend, and regularly attract leading executives from top companies, such as coffee-maker Starbucks and Iomega, a computer software manufacturer, to discuss investment. Berger is predicting the same thing will happen in Britain, which is why he has brought out the UK book and website.

"None of us are taught anything about personal finance at school," he says, "so we are happy to hand over responsibility for our investments to advisers, stockbrokers and fund managers. Yet their records are dreadful. Look at the US Long Term Capital Management Hedge Fund, run on principles designed by two economics Nobel laureates. On August 1 it was worth well over $100 billion; within six weeks it had lost 90 per cent of its value.

"Sometimes the markets go down for a few years," says Berger, "but historically the FTSE has grown by an average of 12.2 per cent every year since 1918. You could take the view that this can't continue, but then look at what it has survived: depression, the second world war, the cold war, the oil crisis. So provided there's not a nuclear war — in which case investments will be the last thing on anybody's mind — and you're prepared to invest for the long term you can't really go wrong."

So how are the Gardners' and Berger's own investments doing? Thanks to Amazon and America On Line, Dave's portfolio has grown by 360 per cent since August 1994 compared with a market average of 130 per cent. Tom's more conservative stocks in The Gap and Coca-Cola have grown by 7.5 per cent since February compared with an average of 5 per cent.

Berger's portfolio, which was created this February, is down overall but up against the market trend.

He claims not to be too bothered. "What about your pension?" I ask right at the end. "I don't have one," he replies. "The charges are a rip-off, and you often get screwed when you have to buy the annuity. I'd rather do it all myself."

Jest a minute . . . David Berger, the Devon doctor who has imported to Britain a new attitude to share dealing PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

The Motley Fool UK Investment Guide is published by Boxtree, price £12.99. You can contact the website on http://www.fool.co.uk

In Brief

ROVER is seeking to cut up to 2,400 jobs as the price of keeping open the UK's biggest car-making factory at Longbridge, in the West Midlands, after parent company BMW warned that the plant's future was in doubt amid escalating losses. Meanwhile Volkswagen said it would invest $840 million in its newly acquired Rolls-Royce and Bentley car factory in Crewe, creating many new jobs over the next five years.

CRITICAL talks on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment took a step backwards in Paris, after members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development failed to agree even a date for their next meeting. The process was thrown into chaos after the French withdrew from the talks. The OECD has signalled it will now bow to demands that the treaty include clauses to protect workers and the environment.

JAPAN'S biggest securities house plunged $1.4 billion into the red in the past six months and plans to shed up to 2,000 of its 16,000 worldwide workforce. Nomura Securities blamed its losses on the gyrations of the world's stock markets.

HONG KONG made a $3.7 billion paper profit from buying stocks during its August battle with speculators.

A CHANGE in the law may force City of London institutions to turn away billions of dollars worth of business and to inform on any client they suspect of evading tax anywhere in the world. A 1955 ruling that Britain does not enforce other countries' taxes applies only to civil, and not criminal, proceedings, according to a confidential Treasury counsel opinion.

EIGHT international banks believe they have cracked one of the main deterrents to Internet banking — the safety and integrity of business conducted via the Internet. The banks have spent more than $10 million on the "global trust enterprise", codenamed Roosevelt.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates October 26	Sterling rates October 19
Australia	2.7295-2.7333	2.6851-2.6890
Austria	19.50-19.52	19.45-19.47
Belgium	57.18-57.29	57.04-57.14
Canada	2.6057-2.6089	2.6298-2.6329
Denmark	10.54-10.55	10.51-10.52
France	9.29-9.30	9.274-9.281
Germany	2.7728-2.7755	2.7659-2.7678
Hong Kong	13.06-13.07	13.15-13.16
Ireland	1.1110-1.1139	1.1075-1.1117
Italy	2,742-2,745	2,735-2,738
Japan	199.92-200.19	194.62-194.89
Netherlands	3.1272-3.1299	3.1194-3.1224
New Zealand	3.2176-3.2238	3.1702-3.1761
Norway	12.32-12.33	12.64-12.64
Portugal	284.24-284.61	283.66-284.05
Spain	235.61-235.82	234.99-235.28
Sweden	12.90-12.92	13.23-13.26
Switzerland	2.2643-2.2672	2.2463-2.2486
USA	1.6860-1.6870	1.6993-1.6992
ECU	1.4093-1.4110	1.4045-1.4066

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For further details and an application form, please write to the Personnel Manager at IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, LONDON WC1H 0DD or fax on +44 171 388 2826 or email on Personnel@iied.org. Information packs will be forwarded by mail only. We welcome international applications.

CVs will not be accepted.

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IIED aims to be an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from women or members of ethnic minorities.

Managing development activities

Programme Director
Moscow, Russia

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Closing date: 23rd November 1998.

East European Partnership — An initiative by VSO

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You will have a qualification in medical or health related field, combined with a minimum of three years' overseas humanitarian aid experience including programme and people management, national/international representation and conducting assessments. An awareness of socio-political, geo-political and humanitarian and issues, preferably of this region, is essential.

Please send CV to: Human Resources Team, MERLIN, 14 David Mews, Porter St, London W1M 1HW. Fax: 0171 487 4042/email: hr@merlin.org.uk. (Ref: GW/RR/11/98) Closing date: 20 November 1998

Please note: To keep costs to a minimum only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.



The International Rescue Committee, a private, non-profit agency assisting refugees worldwide is currently seeking candidates for the **Emergency Response Roster** *for the following positions:*

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Memisa is looking for candidates for the positions of:

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vac.nr. PN98SLE001

The PC is responsible for the Memisa programmes in Sierra Leone, including responsibility for; all external contacts (government authorities, other NGO's, donors, local partners, etc), project identification, implementation, monitoring and reporting (narrative and financial) to Memisa head-office and donors, supervision of expatriate and local staff. Memisa is starting activities in Sierra Leone and the PC will have to set up the necessary field structure to run the programmes. Inland travelling, as far as security allows, is part of the tasks.

The PC has an academic degree in a socio-economic field, two years of management experience in relief circumstances and an excellent command of the English language. He/she is available as of today for at least 6 months. Sierra Leone is considered unfit for dependents. Gross salary is max. Nlg. 7,069 p/m, depending on age and experience. Information related to this position available with Delphine Pinault, desk officer.

Executive Director (ED)
vac. nr.PN98RDC002

The ED will develop and manage the young pharmaceutical store APAMESK in Bukavu, Eastern RDCongo. The ED is responsible for the overall functioning of the store, supervision of local staff, setting up of accounting, administrative and stockkeeping systems (with the assistance of an expatriate administrator), acquisition of credits and subsidiaries (and reporting to donors thereon), coordination with Apamesk members, etc. The ED reports to the locally present Board and to Memisa. Considering the current situation in RDC, Apamesk can play a role in humanitarian assistance in the field of drugs distribution.

The ED has a higher (tertiary) or academic degree in the field of economy, marketing or management, and a minimum of three years of associated management experience in a (pref. transitional) relief context. He/she is available for at least one year.

Gross salary is max. Nlg. 7,069 p/m depending on age and experience. DRC is considered unfit for dependents. Information related to this position available with Delphine Pinault, desk officer.

Health Economist (HE) - vac.nr.PA98CMD002

The HE will initiate and implement health economy activities within the new Memisa Kampot Health Programme in Cambodia. Main objective of these activities is to improve financial sustainability of the health facilities through the set up of a new health management information system, accounting system, cooperate with health reforms in Cambodia, introduce (...) system for staff salary and survey on health care seeking behaviour.

The HE is an (health) economist with at least 3 years practical experience in health development programs and preferably in health reforms in developing countries. He/she has experience in conducting workshops. He/she is available for 18 months during a period of three years, starting from January 1999.

Gross salary is max. NLG 7,069 p/m depending on age and experience. Information related to this position is available with Mrs J. Dekker.

Senior Health Officer (SHO) - vac.nr. PA98CMD001

The SHO will work in a large health care rehabilitation programme in Kampot Province, Cambodia. Activities contain training in medical care, assistance in physical planning of hospitals and HCs, assistance in preventive and promotive programmes, organization of community surveys, and other technical assistance.

The SHO is an EU recognised qualified medical doctor, with an MPH or similar training, and at least a minimum of three years working experience in developing countries. He/she has good communication skills, is willing to travel frequently, and is willing to learn Khmer. Knowledge of French is an asset.

Gross salary is max. NLG 7,069 p/m depending on age and experience. The contract will be for 3 years, starting from January 1999. Information on this position is available with Mrs J Dekker.

For pending vacancies Memisa will shortly be looking for:

A Programme Co-ordinator Kurdistan; a Programme Co-ordinator Kampot, Cambodia; a tropical Medical Doctor Burundi, a Senior Public Health Nurse Burundi.

Information on all vacancies is available at the Memisa office, Overseas Personnel Services, on Mondays and Tuesdays. Only EU recognised certificates can be considered for all positions. According to experience and age, specific bonuses can be added to the mentioned salaries.

Written applications with extensive CV for all vacancies can be directed within 2 weeks after publication to: Memisa, Overseas Personnel Services, PO Box 61, 3000 AB Rotterdam, The Netherlands. tel: (31)/10/2084646. fax (31)/10/20647, E mail: recruit@memisa.nl

PRINCIPAL

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- good interpersonal skills;
- good team member;
- good health, fitness and willingness to travel and work in arduous and sometimes insecure parts of the world.

The successful applicant must be based in a place with good international access and communications, but not necessarily in Oxford or in the UK.

For further details and an application form please send a large SAE to:
International Human Resources, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, quoting reference number: OS/ESP/LOG/HM/GW.
Closing date: 30 November 1998.
Interview date: 11 December 1998.

Founded in 1942, Oxfam works with people regardless of race or religion in their struggle against poverty. Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International. For further information http://www.oxfam.org.uk/



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For further details write to Alice Desira, Overseas Personnel Administrator, SCF, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD or fax: 0171 793 7610. Closing date: 5th December 1998.

This is a readvertisment, previous applicants need not apply

If you have not heard from us within 3 weeks of the closing date you should assume that you have not been shortlisted for interview on this occasion

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Postgraduate qualifications will normally be required (or a teaching qualification and industrial experience for vocational education). Demonstrable experience in managing complex change would be desirable.

The details of successful applicants will be added to the database of consultants whom we will consider for opportunities as they arise. Only successful applicants will be notified. This will be within 3 months of the closing date for applications.

Please send expressions of interest, (quoting reference 98/5/022/B), availability and curriculum vitae no later than 30 November to Mark Hepworth, Overseas Appointments Services, Development and Training Services, The British Council, 58 Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 6BB UK

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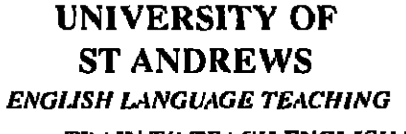
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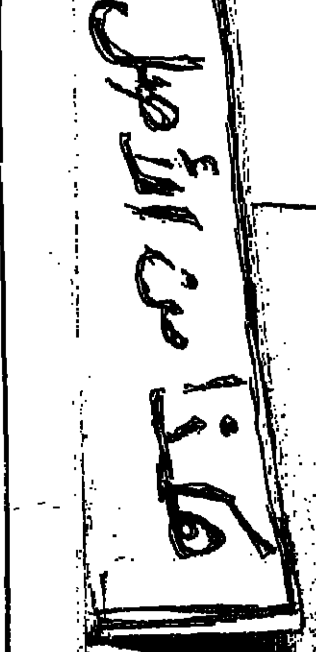


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Eco-terrorists turn up heat

Ed Vulliamy reports from San Francisco on activists ready to wage war on corporate America

FEW PEOPLE in the United States have heard of, let alone read, the magazine. But the September issue of Live Wild Or Die delivered an eco-terrorist manifesto that has come to a smoking climax in the ski town of Vail, Colorado.

The young man in rainbow boots handing me a copy of the magazine in a San Francisco café last week said its warnings to "earth rapers" and "animal abusers" of a new "pro-earth revolution" against the "Death Industries" may sound just like "cool talk, but it's for real, man. You only have to read *their* papers."

He was referring to the mainstream newspapers, which have been reporting the country's biggest eco-terrorist outrage — the setting of seven fires that ravaged Vail, the mountain playground of the super-rich, where the slopes are splattered with villas and ski chairlifts. A clear case, said the FBI, of arson, causing $12 million worth of damage.

Then came the e-mail: "On behalf of the lynx, five buildings and four ski lifts at Vail were reduced to ashes on the night of Sunday, October 18 . . . Putting profits ahead of Colorado's wildlife will not be tolerated. This action is just a warning. We will be back if this greedy corporation 'Vail Resorts Inc' continues to trespass into wild and unroaded areas." It was signed the "Earth Liberation Front".

The Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms regards ELF's claim of responsibility as legitimate, but has no suspects. The FBI's domestic terrorism section is searching for the arsonists.

But if the identity of the arsonists is not clear, their motives are. The attack came barely a week after a court dismissed a legal challenge by local environmentalists to stop further grand-scale development in what is already the US's most expansive skiing area. The first trees have already been felled.

The environmentalists pitted against Vail Resorts, the principal developer, argued that the planned development would jeopardise a programme for the re-introduction of lynx into the area. After the arson attack, wildlife groups were quick to disassociate themselves from what the authorities are calling "the most expensive act of eco-terrorism to date". And, like the FBI, they are asking themselves: who are the Earth Liberation Front?

A portrait of the organisation behind the Vail attack — and its origins — emerged last weekend in the diners and coffee houses of the San Francisco underground. Militant supporters of ELF revealed the story of a 20-year war between the authorities and the revolutionary environmental movement that spawned their group. They are led by a man in his early 30s who calls himself "Voice from the Siskiyous". They speak earnestly but cautiously, insisting on anonymity. The atmosphere in the wake of the Colorado arson is uncomfortable.

Their story begins in 1979 with the founding of Earth First!, a millenarian group rooted in the holistic, counter-cultural philosophy of "deep ecology" inspired by Utah anarchist Edward Abbey's novel The Monkey Wrench Gang.

Its founder, David Foreman, frustrated with his job as a lobbyist for the Wilderness Society, first led the group into action in protest against a dam at Glen Canyon, Colorado, sabotaging the bulldozers — spawning the terms "ecotage" and "monkeywrenching".

Foreman laid out the philosophy of "ecotage", which still propels the ELF: to bring about sufficient disruption so that "the cost of repairs, the delays, the downtime, may be too much for the bureaucrats and exploiters to accept".

As the movement threw itself into the campaigns to preserve forests in the US northwest, its actions became more flamboyant, using spikes

> **'Economic sabotage is the only thing the earth-raping, animal-abusing scum will respond to'**

to wreck tree-felling equipment, disabling machinery and arson.

It reached its apogee in 1986 after monkeywrenchers cut powerlines to a nuclear plant in Palo Verde, Arizona. The FBI argued that this could induce a meltdown. Surveillance and harassment of Earth First! became acute.

In 1988 Earth First! fell apart. Foreman, concerned at the growing violence, ceded the leadership to Darryl Cherney and Judy Bari. They promised to make the lumber companies "quake in their boots". The actions against dams, loggers, ski bowls and nuclear plants became more ambitious. Meanwhile the group was being seeded with FBI informers, and drew the wrath of the Pacific Lumber company, against which the group mounted its biggest campaign for the Headwaters Redwood forest of California.

Foreman was dragged back into the movement when arrested at his suburban Tucson home by armed FBI agents. Four others were also arrested. The FBI investigation intensified, and in May 1990, at the height of the campaign to save the Redwoods, a 15-inch pipe bomb exploded under the driver's seat of a car belonging to Cherney and Bari. Both were injured, Bari crippled.

The incident rocked Earth First!. Foreman said his movement had been "taken over by West Coast yippies more interested in pursuing the wilderness within than the wilderness without".

But Earth First! continued to campaign, and won huge publicity and sympathy this summer with a court action over a lumber protest during which liquid pepper was sprayed into demonstrators' eyes. The group is now part of the Direct Action Movement, based in Eugene, Oregon, and publishes a Direct Action Manual — with an emphasis on non-violent sabotage.

But after the car bomb, a substantial group of the "ecoteurs" and violent militants broke away and decided to go underground, joining up with the animal rights underground, which was busy attacking vivisection laboratories and fur farms. The ELF was formed.

The ELF is now part of a network loosely fronted by an alliance called the Liberation Collective, based in Portland, Oregon. Factions in the collective's orbit work together to mount operations, usually with the ELF in conjunction with the Animal Liberation Front.

The network, said supporters last week, is "arrest-proof and mobile". Last year, however, five ELF members from Michigan were charged with breaking, entering and mischief after 9,000 mink were released from an Ontario fur ranch. It was the ELF's most spectacular escapade to date, though many of the mink died after turning on each other.

The ELF and ALF claimed joint responsibility for the burning of a corral in Oregon last winter, in protest against the rounding up of wild horses. Now the ELF communicates with the overground world through the ALF website.

This year the ELF claimed that, with the ALF, it had lit "a bonfire or two at facilities which make it a daily routine to kill and destroy wildlife" — two animal experiment establishments. And Live Wild Or Die spells out the manifesto, sealing the alliance between the ELF and ALF that more or less predicted last weekend's arson attack in Colorado.

It states that environmental and animal rights groups have to "learn from each other what needs to happen to make both movements a real threat to the Death Industries". Readers are urged to coordinate "attacks on the enemy and move beyond our supposed differences".

The "warriors" who have taken on the timber industry in recent months are, says the document, "the beginning of a pro-earth, pro-animal revolutionary movement . . . Economic sabotage is the only thing the earth-raping, animal-abusing scum will respond to." — *The Observer*

Marilyn French tells **Maureen Freely** how cancer has helped her shed the burden of responsibility

Mother courage

I FIRST met Marilyn French about 10 years ago, when she came to London to promote a novel called Her Mother's Daughter. I was working for a feminist magazine that was to go out of business a few weeks later. I was going through my black phase, although due to lack of funds the blacks were fast fading into grey. This was in sharp contrast to everyone else in the dining room at Claridge's, and in sharpest contrast to the elegant, bejewelled, supremely urbane feminist icon sitting opposite who was buying me lunch.

I had never interviewed anyone before, and Marilyn could tell. She mothered me expertly through one near-disaster after another. Whenever I got stage fright, she'd suppress a sigh, replace it with a bright smile, and say: "Another thing you might be interested to know is how I became involved with the women's movement," or "You'd probably like to ask me something about my first novel, The Women's Room."

Her temper did fray a bit during the main course, when I challenged something sweeping she said about men. She gave me a look I had not seen since I got that disappointing grade on a history test, aged 16, and said: "I can tell you haven't read my book on women and power." She was right! How had she known? After I had spluttered a string of abject apologies, she took pity on me and tried to calm me down by offering me her salad.

Then she asked me to tell her a bit about myself, a mistake, because I was in the middle of a divorce. But she was the perfect listener as I rambled on and on and on. She gave me lots of advice I now know to be good, largely because I didn't follow any of it.

She kept her calm by dragging on an endless succession of cigarettes. As she recounts in her new book, A Season In Hell, these were almost to be the death of her. Five and a half years ago, she was found to have cancer of the oesophagus.

This sort of cancer is almost always fatal. Because it had already metastasised, her doctors expected her to be dead within the year, if not before. When they put her through a severe regimen of chemotherapy and radiation, they went out of their way to convince her that nothing was likely to come of it. But she refused to believe them. She finds this puzzling, she says in her book, because she had always been the sort of person who took great stock in facing facts. What puzzles her and her doctors most, though, is her complete recovery.

Recovery from cancer, that is. She will never recover from the cure, which ravaged her throat, her kidneys and her urinary tract, killed half her heart, gave her diabetes, damaged the part of her brain that governs motor skills, and made her bones so porous that a masseuse giving her a spot of shiatsu actually broke her back. Another thing that will never recover is her bank balance: her medical bills came to more than half a million dollars.

She still takes at least 14 prescription medications, and sometimes as many as 19, every day. No one can say how many years she has left. The only certainty is that she's going to be an invalid for the duration. But the strangest thing about A Season In Hell is that, even though it is a meticulous catalogue of her descent into this other, diminished, way of life, even though it assures you every step of the way that all your worst fears about cancer and its cures are true, it ends up being immensely cheering.

This is partly due to heroic rallying on the part of her children and her friends. It has been a great comfort to know that others will care for her simply because she has cared for them. But the best thing cancer did, she says, is rob her of her future. "Stuck in the present, I can devote myself to it . . . I move through the day from pleasure to pleasure like a woman walking through the halls of a great art gallery."

In the book, she only refers obliquely to the effect this has had on her interest in politics, and the feminist cause that consumed so much of her life, but when we met again she was happy to spell it out.

The fight had gone out of her, she told me in her new soft rasp of a voice. Between racking but elegant coughs, she explained that she had spent too much of her life mothering people, she explained. The habit dated back, she thought, to her childhood realisation that her immigrant parents were "shaky in the world and couldn't protect me from it or within it". Her response was to feel responsible for them: "I ended up being their parent. But none of this was I aware of. It's only maybe in the last 10 years or so that I saw that this was my attitude, period. I took this responsibility for my husband, for my children, for my friends.

Marilyn French: no longer the universal parent PHOTO: MARTIN GODWIN

"I stretched this responsibility to the movement," she continued. "I have a vision of how human life could be more felicitous for everyone, not just women. I felt responsible for making sure that this vision got realised in the world, and well, in this political climate nothing could be further from possibility, and so I was really getting frustrated . . . I don't have any of that now, mainly because I feel so shaky myself I don't feel as if I can."

Did that mean she had given up on her vision? "No. I absolutely believe in it, but it's not only someone else's job, it's another generation's. Nothing is going to happen in this climate, nothing good. It's not as if you can even speak about a conspiracy; it's just that the reactionary men like Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch who own the media all agree that the way to deal with women and leftists is just not to print them, or to deprive them of a voice.

"I can't remember the last time we had a feminist on the op-ed page. You'll never find a feminist talking about her long-term vision of change in society. They've closed all the doors to us."

This was not to say that important things weren't happening at the grassroots level. "The real feminism isn't located in any group or organisation, and this confuses the male world, which always stabilises and concentrates power within an institution. Feminism doesn't do that. It is not like being a Republican. It's a way of seeing. It's believing women are as important as men. It's women in groups of one or two or five, doing what needs doing in their neighbourhoods. But what is going on globally is so terrible and so insidious and we don't have the voice to fight it."

Nationally, things looked just as hopeless to her. Americans were in for a long and very bumpy ride with the Republican right. It wasn't just feminism that was being corporatised. Now that the American right had successfully fended off socialised medicine, they were working hard to dismantle social security and even public education. "It's unbelievable! It's disgusting! They seem to want us to be the last . . . big . . . fascist state."

The fire in her voice as she said this, did not quite fit the frail, elegant body it came out of, and it made you wonder if she really had opted out of her old passions to the degree that she claimed, but as our conversation continued, she threw out more and more sparks. First it was born-again piety, in particular the fundamentalists in Congress.

Then it was masculinist writers dominating the American literary scene. Many of them she admired. Mamet was wonderful, Sam Shepard was good sometimes, and Mailer could be "very talented" when he wasn't "playing the fool". But Updike and Roth? Puleeze. "They've spent the last 10 or 15 years writing books about themselves under an alter ego. Their self-involvement is really terrible."

But don't call her a man-basher. Hypocrisy was just as detestable when it was female. Updike got off lightly compared with Simone de Beauvoir. "I'll tell you what I can't forgive — quite apart from the pimping for Sartre and her servility to him, making him look so important when it appears now that at least half the ideas came from her . . . What I *cannot* forgive is her behaviour during the German occupation of Paris. I was just flabbergasted when I read about that. This is a *moral guide*?"

She accompanied this statement with a very fierce look, and an emphatic: "Anyway. That's how I feel about her." At which she caved into another cough. I decided to make my apologies for wearing her out, and leave.

As I made my way home, I tried to puzzle out the difference between the old, forward-planning Marilyn who had once so terrified me, and the new Marilyn, who was so much more cheerful, and entertaining, even when explaining why life was hopeless. It seemed to me that the overwhelming sense of responsibility she had described the old Marilyn as feeling, had not just weighed her down in life, but also given a heavy-heartedness to her writing.

It was as if she thought of her readers as shaky daughters who needed to be handled, and guided, with care. But now she has given up that tiring and exasperating job, and she can speak her own mind. It is a very unusual mind, and far more interesting than even she realises. I hope she has lots of years left, and I hope she continues to take pleasure in writing, because she has so much more to say.

My Season In Hell is published by Virago, price £15.99. If you wish to order this book at the special price of £13, contact CultureShop (see ad, page 28)

All take and no give on the tourist highway

George Monbiot on an empty cultural exchange in a Kenyan game park

I DON'T think I've ever had an argument with a tour operator in which my opponent failed to claim that she or he was facilitating a "cultural exchange". Yes, I've sometimes forced them to concede, tourism does dispossess people. Yes, few of its revenues, especially in the Third World, reach impoverished locals.

Yes, the environment is often scarred and polluted. But tourism is an exchange of culture, which allows us to understand each other better. This scarcely gets questioned.

Along the road to the Masai Mara Reserve in southwestern Kenya is a series of what the Masai call "cultural manyattas". Rings of low wicker huts, they look just like Masai ceremonial villages, but these have been built to lure tourists travelling towards the game reserve.

The Masai are excluded from their lands in the Masai Mara on pain of death, because, the conservation authorities have told me, "tourists don't want to see them there". Much of the rest of their land has been stolen for wheat farming. The differences between themselves and other people are among the few assets they have left and so, reluctantly, they sell them.

The drivers of the buses will only bring their tourists to a manyatta if the Masai have bribed them. The tour guides fail to inform their charges that the villages have been built just for them. So when the buses pull in and the tourists see the Masai lining up to dance, they trample each other in their haste to record the rare and secret ceremony they believe they have stumbled upon.

When the Masai dance for themselves in real manyattas, they huddle together. When they dance for the tourists, they line up like an aerobics class. They jump up and down and chant a bit, then lay out some beadwork for sale. After half an hour, the tourists get back in the bus and move on to see the lions. Not a word is exchanged between them and the Masai, except to haggle. Once, when the tourists had left, I managed to persuade one of the dancers to tell me what he had been chanting. "Come on you tourists," he translated, "buy our beadwork, and give us all your money."

Tourism of this kind seems only to raise cultural barriers. Among the Masai, resentment towards ill-informed visitors has a long history. Many of the Masai consider that certain people, whom they describe as "people with eyes", can see through other people's bodies. As their gaze penetrates the vital organs, they can unwittingly strike people down.

As Western medicine began to spread through Kenya, the Masai heard that there was a machine used by foreigners to see people's bones and guts. Long exposure to its rays could make people ill or even kill them. When foreigners then arrived in their villages and stared at them through cameras, the Masai equated these one-eyed machines with the X-rays they had heard about. They concluded that the tourists had deliberately endowed themselves with eyes.

Cameras are no longer equated by the Masai with X-rays, but resentment towards the insensitivities of tourists remains. It is compounded every time a Westerner spends 10 minutes reducing the cost of his holiday by three or four pence, by battling with a desperately poor Masai over the price of a bead necklace.

There is no cultural exchange. The tourists get a parody of a culture they don't even want to understand. The locals, if they are lucky, get a handful of loose change. And the walls between ourselves and other people rise.



Letter from Uzbekistan Jennifer Balfour

From east to west

"SO THE British are pretty much like the Kazaks," Zamira's father said, referring to the wild, nomadic, camel-herding, yurt-dwelling horsemen of the northern Steppes, in an attempt to understand the land to which his daughter was going for two years. He latched onto our custom of adding milk to strong, black tea as falling vaguely within the remit of a people not too unlike his own.

"And they have round blue eyes like yours," he added. There, despite our shared tea-drinking habits, the similarity ended. He was desperate for something to hold onto as he prepared to let his prize jewel go to the other side of the world, more than a day's bus journey away.

I have grave misgivings about wrenching village girls from their roots and sending them to far-flung countries, but Zamira, despite myriad, last-minute doubts, was determined to seize a scholarship she had been given to study in Britain. I was an unwilling accomplice to the longest and most difficult journey she would ever make in her life.

"So where is this land anyway?" quizzed an uncle, sitting cross-legged opposite me, under vines whose fruit she would never see ripen. We decided that since the sun was setting over the cow shed, England must be roughly in the direction of the cotton field. Speaking of which, he made me promise to ensure her safety during the English cotton harvest and to send melons and home-cooked meals to sustain her through it.

He cut open his own first melon of the summer and we were soon drenched in its juice. It would be Zamira's last for a while. He had heard British fruit was hard and bitter. He had once paid half a day's wages for a green banana and ever since pitied my people, especially in the summer when his orchard dripped with sun-ripened apricots.

A donkey, tired of waiting in the courtyard, let out a raucous cry. Somehow we got on to the subject of donkey "sanatoriums" in my country, and I struggled as much to explain it as he did to understand it.

Soon the whole family gathered for a final meal together, a generous pile of fried rice and carrots, topped with chunks of meat on a central plate, which we rolled into balls with our fingers. I shrank from demands to describe my own national dish, meanly apportioned to individual plates and eaten at a table with knives and forks. Before the steaming rounds of flat bread were broken by the head of the family, Zamira's mother, streaming with tears, took a loaf and gave it to her daughter. She took a single, ceremonial bite and together they hung it on a wall where it would remain until she returned to finish it.

Zamira's taxi driver father led our "funeral cortège" to the station the next day, followed by a second car of wailing female relatives dominated by the last surviving grandmother who regaled them with terrible foreboding. I felt party to wrenching an arm from their body.

We struggled to the train with her patchwork Chinese traders' bag full of borrowed winter clothes and several plastic carriers of Uzbek delicacies. She had been given a kilo of an indeterminate dried plant by her mother, which when burned emits an air-purifying and spirit-driving-out pall, guaranteed to disinfect the most polluted of halls of residence. Eight flat loaves and a large water-melon were packed separately to eat on the plane. We were all inconsolable. Her father pressed a $5 bill into her hands, a week's wages.

Five years of university English under the remnants of a Soviet system had left Zamira sketchy to say the least about the finer details of British life. We rehearsed money and measurements on the plane and completed a whistle-stop tour of Sunday Mirror gossip, which revealed Princess Diana, rather confusingly, to be the ex-wife of Prince Charles, and not in fact as she had supposed, the President of England.

But the last-minute swotting was too much for both of us. I was too ambivalent about the project to be enthusiastic about two years that would ruin her for village life for ever. She knew she would return to marry a village boy, to teach Soviet English at a village school. She knew she would bear village children who one day she would regale with tales of a land more than a day's bus journey away. A land where women could speak their minds, and some chose not to have children, where you could buy strawberries in winter and where bananas were sweet.

She knew no one would believe her and I found myself secretly hoping she would be home before long.



Peary caribou may die out because climate change has made it harder for them to dig for food

Arctic caribou suffer from global warming

Paul Brown

ONE of the world's hardiest animal species, the Peary caribou of the high Canadian Arctic, may be the first animal to become extinct as a result of global warming, according to scientists.

Peary numbers have dropped because of changing weather. Warmer temperatures and heavier snow have meant the animals cannot dig down to winter fodder, so they starve. An emergency programme has been set up to save the animal, which has suffered a 95 per cent population decline. Numbers dropped from 24,320 in 1961 to 1,100 in 1997.

The Inuit who used to hunt the Peary for food have imposed a ban on killing it, and Canada is considering moving whole populations of Arctic wolves to stop them hunting the caribou.

The Peary caribou are a relative of the European reindeer and a smaller, more northerly sub-species of the main caribou herds, with shorter legs and larger hooves. These adaptations are to help with the extreme cold and digging in the snow but the heavier, dense snow of autumn defeats their best efforts to find food.

Stephanie Tunmore of Greenpeace said: "Sadly, this is unlikely to be the last species to face extinction and could signal the start of a major Arctic wildlife collapse that appears related to global climate change.

"It may already be too late to save the Peary caribou, but it is a very clear signal that we must take political action now to prevent the disaster of global warming overtaking us."

A Country Diary

Micaela Fairman-Wright

NEW BRUNSWICK, Canada: The hummingbirds left early this year. It was if they knew that the official end of summer had arrived and had made plans accordingly. All summer the bright red feeder filled with a sticky sugar solution had been defended valiantly by the dominant male who chased off all comers with darting thrusts from his beak and surprising loud cheeps from a bird no longer than my finger.

The deciduous trees and sugar maples are now wearing their autumn finery. The leaves are multiple shades of red and gold, made all the more vivid by the backdrop of dark green spruce. Deer peek into our newly fenced vegetable garden looking longingly at the ripening tomatoes still on the vine. In the spring we built a low fence, much to the hilarity of the neighbours, who assumed the deer would just jump over. Luckily the deer were as lazy as we suspected and instead go and raid the neighbours' unfenced gardens. The apple trees however, have fruit to spare so at dusk and dawn it is a common sight to see our resident doe nibbling gracefully at the windfalls while her two white-spotted fawns stand nearby, ready to fade away into the trees at any sign of movement from the house.

In town, a juvenile moose wandered into a parking lot and was having a stand-off with the gathering crowd, when the alerted "moose patrol" arrived to tranquillise it.

It is Hallowe'en and on every porch evil-looking men with pumpkin heads and dungarees stuffed with straw sit on chairs leering at passers-by. Giant rubber spiders hang on webs of string and plastic skeletons are attached in to trees and bushes to rattle menacingly in the wind. All such devices delight and frighten the children dressed in various costumes who come to collect the candy treats given out by strangers to those who boldly brave such dangers on this special night.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHAT can I do with old mobile phones?

HANG them up. — *John Tuener, Toronto, Canada*

GIVE them to people who travel regularly on trains. — *Roger Pain, Ljubjana, Slovenia*

NO ONE here has even started thinking about the waste disposal implications of digitalisation. Perhaps there should be a rule that if you want to manufacture a new technology, then you become responsible for getting rid of the old one. — *Cameron Tonkin, Rozelle, NSW, Australia*

THEY can be used as toy phones. The children's ward at local hospitals would welcome them with open arms. — *Harish and Chandni Shah, Master Rikesh, London*

WHICH country has the largest empire?

BRITAIN, the United States, and France have the most colonies remaining on the United Nations Decolonisation Committee list of non-self-governing territories. — *Nic Maclellan, Suva, Fiji*

IT HAS to be Java, the most populated island in the Indonesian archipelago. It holds effective political and social control over the world's most expansive archipelago, stretching east to west some 5,000km from the island of Sabang off the northern tip of Sumatra, to the islets off Merauke in Irian Jaya, and north to south 1,770 kilometres from the border with Malaysian-controlled Sabah to the tiny island of Roti off the southern tip of Timor.

Indonesia rose out of the trading arm of the Dutch empire and it was the Dutch who started the process of transmigration in 1905 to relieve the population pressure in Java by shipping people to other islands such as Borneo and Sulawesi. This programme of colonisation continued throughout the Suharto regime — despite objections by indigenous populations, including recent and continuing rebellions in Aceh and East Timor. — *Marc Llewellyn, Sydney, Australia*

CHINA, with its forcible rule over Tibet, Xinchiang and part of Mongolia, is by far the world's largest empire. Israeli control of the United States Congress, which is often called "Israeli Occupied Territory" makes Israel the richest empire in the world. — *Munawar Karim, Fairport, New York, USA*

HAS there ever been a real-life Bond-style villain?

FURTHER to the comparison between Robert Maxwell and Sir Hugo Drax (October 4), the later Bond movies featured villains who were readily comparable with real life rogues.

In The Living Daylights, James Bond took on a paramilitary American arms dealer based in North Africa named Brad Whitaker — a character vaguely resembling the ex-CIA agent turned terrorist Edwin P Wilson. In Licence To Kill, Bond fought Franz Sanchez — a pock-marked drug-running kingpin of a Central American country. About the same time, George Bush was trying to drive from office a pock-marked drug runner named Manuel Noriega, using a mix of heavy metal music and marines. Finally, we have 007's latest nemesis, global media magnate Elliott Carver in Tomorrow Never Dies. I leave readers to draw their own conclusions about his identity. — *David Griffiths, Heworth, York*

Any answers?

SINCE oestrogen can damage male reproductive organs, and soya is a source of plant oestrogen, should soya carry a health warning? — *Oliver Facey, Andover, Hampshire*

I HAVE heard that the phrase "bringing coals to Newcastle" actually refers to the Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia. Is this true? — *Karl Lloyd, QMW College, London*

HAS a fire station ever burned down? — *Hilary Cole, London*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Singing politics with passion

CONCERTS
Robin Denselow

HE MAY not think much of New Labour's achievements, but **Billy Bragg's** own Great Leap Forward is doing rather nicely. It was, to put it mildly, an enormous gamble for Barking's best-known singing socialist and Clash fan to take on the mantle of America's legendary singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie, but Guthrie's daughter Nora would have been delighted if she had seen the audience reaction at the Forum, in north London.

It was she who invited Bragg to look through her father's archives, and write new settings for lyrics of Guthrie songs that had never been recorded before, and for which the original melodies were not known, because Guthrie never wrote them down. The resulting album, Mermaid Avenue, recorded by Bragg and the American band Wilco, was a cheerful blend of ballads and country-rock that showed Woody in a new light — a bit of a lad, but also a passionate idealist with a sensitive nature.

There were many in the packed-out, predominantly male crowd who clearly saw themselves in the same light. Guthrie's lyrics may have been written back in the forties and early fifties, but Bragg treated them as if they were brand new. So Walt Whitman's Niece sounded like a contemporary good-time anthem about men behaving badly. Christ For President was presented as Guthrie's take on the Clinton scandal, and Eisler On The Go, which deals with the post-war anti-communist purges, was presented as a thoughtful ballad of an artist not knowing how he would deal with persecution.

Woody in a new light . . . Billy Bragg plays Guthrie PHOTO: STEVE GILLETT

The concert was an old-fashioned political benefit, as part of the campaign against the "wonderful shiny bright new Labour government's" decision not to include the under-21s in the minimum-wage agreement, and it turned out — of course — that Guthrie had written a song for this too: I Guess I Planted, a rousing pro-union ballad.

Bragg was joined in all this by his current band, The Blokes, who were introduced as Posh Bloke, Sporty Bloke, and so on. Baby Bloke, a jovial grey-haired keyboard-player, turned out to be Ian McLagen, one-time stalwart of the Small Faces and sometime side-man to the Rolling Stones. When the rest of the band left the stage "to watch the football", McLagen joined Bragg for a series of Billy's early pained love songs like A Lover Sings, and now the blokes in the audience could really let their feelings show. There are, I suspect, a group of men who only sing, and really show their emotions, at football matches or Billy Bragg concerts, and there were some who even punched the air as they roared through The Milkman Of Human Kindness and New England.

This unique blend of socialism and male catharsis was mixed with a fine line in Braggian wit, with a discourse on food ("In Essex we think of rhubarb as the celery of the gods") and a swipe at Pinochet and Oswald Mosley, who once held rallies in the Forum. This led naturally to a rousing treatment of Guthrie's All You Fascists Are Bound To Lose and the latest re-write of Waiting For The Great Leap Forward, which now includes the glorious line, "The revolution is just a focus group away."

June Tabor has always been a wildly adventurous performer. She may have emerged from the folk circuit and established a reputation as one of Britain's greatest interpreters of popular song, but her chillingly intense style has already been applied to rock songs and jazz standards, as well as traditional ballads. The fact that she appeared as part of London's Folk In The Fall season was certainly not going to limit her repertoire.

She started with a song from "the blessed Richard Thompson", but this version of Pharaoh was given a new edge as her hauntingly direct vocals were matched by percussion provided by the tapping of a violin bow, with exuberant flurries from the eight-man brass and reed section. Then came a tribute to Lal Waterson, who died in September, with a revival of Fine Horseman, now treated to a new setting dominated by Huw Warren's piano.

The repertoire was extraordinary: from traditional songs treated with menace and sadness, through to a brassy Kris Kristofferson lament, jazz ballads, and a brave selection of standards. Added in with all this was the Creative Jazz Orchestra, celebrated for their cheerfully eclectic range of influences, freely mixing jazz with Celtic roots, Africa or the circus.

Giant steps from the son

JAZZ
John Fordham

THE 33-year-old son of John Coltrane, "the patron saint of tenor sax", found himself between a rock and a hard place the moment he took up the saxophone. Inevitably, compared with the turbulent and obsessive genius whose name he bears — and who died when he was too young to remember — he finds himself confronted with tougher rites of passage than probably any other young sax player on the planet.

Since Ravi Coltrane appears to share with his late father the modesty, generosity and reflectiveness that observers found such a startling contrast with the guru's wild and blazing saxophone odysseys, the option of coasting on the legend definitely doesn't appeal to him. He made that clear with his own band and his own repertoire at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Ravi Coltrane made his British debut as a bandleader with an alert and skilful combo including the virtuoso trumpeter Ralph Alessi, recently seen in London with Uri Caine's Mahler Revisited. An occasion of mixed virtues, it was hard to tell how much the young saxophonist had deliberately turned away from the intense, sometimes abrasive John Coltrane-style "sheets of sound" towards a cooler and more intricately lyrical approach. The quintet's music was certainly dependent on a softly interwoven contrapuntal dialogue between the sax and the trumpet for the ensemble parts.

At times, however, the steady dynamic levels and eschewing of a clear melodic centre made the themes rather amorphous and unfocused. This was sometimes continued in Coltrane's own solos, despite their serpentine fluidity, and in Alessi's more extensive deployment of short, twisting phrases. But Ravi Coltrane's sound has an affecting delicacy and lightness (his tenor sound resembles an alto's at times) and he deploys it as both a texture and a dominant voice, concerned for the collective sound of a highly collaborative band.

Some of the sharpest and most forceful exchanges of the show came in the trio sections, with Andy Milne, a fine Herbie Hancock-like pianist, swapping deceptively scattered percussive chords with the crisp interjections of bassist Darryl Hall and drummer Steve Hass, rather in the timelessly dramatic manner of the mid-sixties Miles Davis group. On this evidence, Ravi Coltrane appears to have honed the technique but not yet allowed himself to let go. It was nevertheless a frequently pleasing, intelligent and unaffectedly musical show.

Duo rise to supreme challenge

CLASSICAL
Tim Ashley

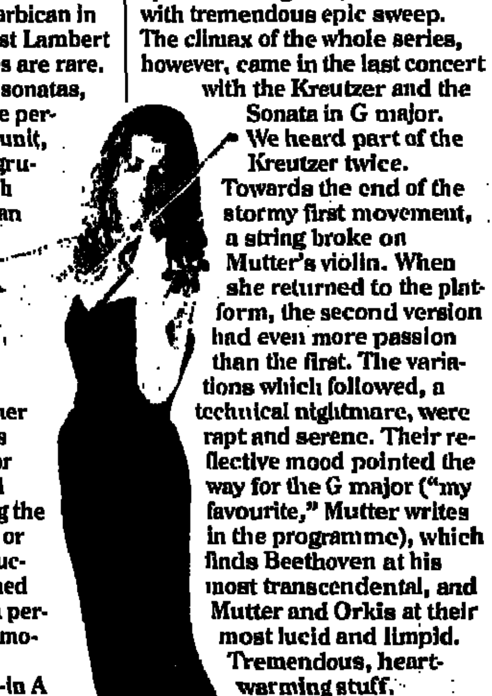
"THE most important project of her career," is how a programme note describes Anne-Sophie Mutter's Beethoven sonata series at the Barbican in London with the pianist Lambert Orkis. Complete cycles are rare. Taken as a whole, the sonatas, which demand that the performers function as a unit, form one of the most gruelling challenges which either of the players can face.

Mutter and Orkis rise to that challenge supremely. Mutter pushes both her formidable technique and her expressive range to its limits in her search for the music's emotional truth, never hindering the melodic ebb and flow or losing sight of the structure. Orkis is restrained throughout, always in perfect accord with the emotion she is creating.

In the early, reined-in A major sonata, with its repetitive figurations, at once bucolic and obsessive, they negotiate the rapid upward scales with flawless precision — this is music where the slightest slip on either side could be ruinous.

The underrated E Flat sonata contrasts it with its rich melodic profusion. Mutter and Orkis, opulent throughout, invest it with tremendous epic sweep. The climax of the whole series, however, came in the last concert with the Kreutzer and the Sonata in G major.

We heard part of the Kreutzer twice. Towards the end of the stormy first movement, a string broke on Mutter's violin. When she returned to the platform, the second version had even more passion than the first. The variations which followed, a technical nightmare, were rapt and serene. Their reflective mood pointed the way for the G major ("my favourite," Mutter writes in the programme), which finds Beethoven at his most transcendental, and Mutter and Orkis at their most lucid and limpid. Tremendous, heart-warming stuff.



Mutter: pushes her technique to its limits

Classical CDs

Andrew Clements

Monteverdi: Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda; Il Ballo Delle Ingrate
Concerto Italiano /Alessandrini
(Opus 111 OPS 1961) £14.49

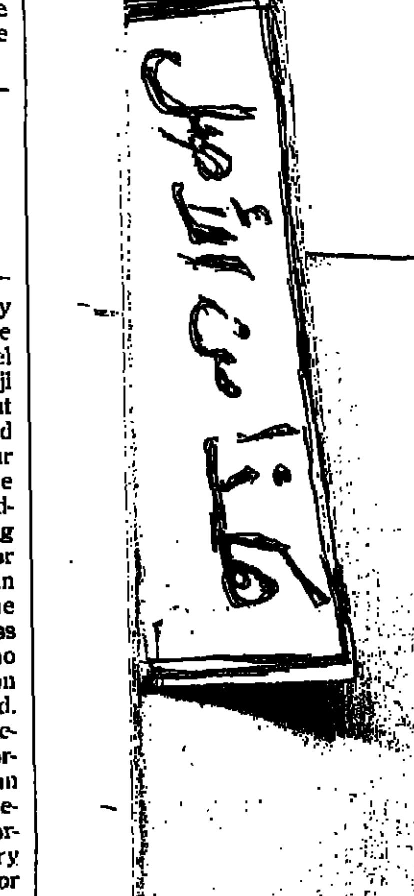
MONTEVERDI'S Eighth Book of Madrigals is the most diverse and remarkable of all his collections, combining the madrigals of love and war that give the volume its title with two works intended for theatrical presentation. After their outstanding collection of the warlike numbers from Book Eight, released last year, Rinaldo Alessandrini and his Concerto Italiano now tackle the two dramatic pieces. Alessandrini gives both works wonderfully fluid and emotionally precise performances, with instrumental lines that move as effortlessly as the singers and fuse the words, their setting and accompaniments into a perfectly organic whole.

Mahler: Symphony No 3; Songs from Das Knaben Wunderhorn
Remmert / Keenlyside / City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus & Orchestra / Rattle
(EMI 556657 2) (2 CDs) £22.49

SIMON RATTLE'S command of the Third Symphony grows ever more impressive as this performance unfolds. The organic way in which he and the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus and Orchestra have evolved their Mahler style is eloquently demonstrated by the exactly judged restraint and tonal refinement that typifies every detail; the careful, unhistrionic pacing of the opening movements is proved to be totally logical by the time the slow finale is reached, where every phrase has a perfectly natural shape and unforced expressiveness. Rattle's Mahler is two-headed — one face turned back nostalgically to the 19th century, the other looking anxiously into the 20th. Even in a selection of songs from Das Knaben Wunderhorn, delivered with unfailingly beautiful tone by Simon Keenlyside, the future looms; there's an almost Bergian tang to the orchestral detail, and an absolute refusal to dwell on sentiment.

Ravel: Shéhérazade; Debussy: La Damoiselle Elue; Britten: Les Illuminations
McNair/Graham/Tanglewood Festival Chorus/Boston Symphony/Ozawa
(Philips 446 682-2) £14.99

SYLVIA McNAIR'S creamy soprano is ideally suited to the perfumed worlds of Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, and Seiji Ozawa too is at his best in music that places such emphasis upon the lucid rendering of instrumental colour and texture. McNair is most at home in Shéhérazade, lusciously moulding the sensuous lines and letting their sexual implications speak for themselves, but in Benjamin Britten's Rimbaud settings she pushes too hard, and the brittleness is emphasised by Ozawa, who makes the strings of the Boston Symphony deliberately raw-edged. Debussy's early *poème lyrique* receives the most poised performance, with the mezzo Susan Graham matching McNair's refinement, while the unfolding of the orchestral and choral tapestry provides the perfect cushion for their opulent voices.



Big chill in the deep freeze

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

I AM VERY partial to a good funeral and I have been eagerly waiting for Anne Malone's in Coronation Street. Last week Anne (Eve Steele), Freshco's manageress, froze to death in the deep freeze, where she was secretly poisoning the fish fingers.

Trevor, the security man, whose brain serves merely to keep his ears from banging together, accidentally locked her in. She expired crying "Trevor!" 11 times, each "Trevor!" expressive of a different emotion and a lower temperature. An exhilarating challenge for any actress, you feel. (Incidentally, anyone who notices an entertaining assonance between Freshco and Tesco is completely wrong.)

This was sensational stuff. People have been known to leave Coronation Street abruptly, as if struck in the small of the back by a runaway lorry. In fact, they often are struck by a runaway lorry — or, in the case of Rita's husband, a Blackpool tram. Once the Rovers burst into flames. But ice? That's new.

I always advise people to have their last words well polished and ready for use. You never know when you may need them. If you don't, you may find yourself at the florid mercy of the press.

An old reporter I once knew said, after vainly waiting outside Buckingham Palace for something snappy from the expiring George V, "Well, lads, it's *'How goes the Empire?'* then." And it was.

My own favourite came from S J Perelman, who wrote the Marx Brothers' best jokes. The day he died, his taxi driver dropped him at home, saying, "Have a nice day, Mr Perelman."

"Listen!" he snarled. "Don't poke your nose into my affairs. I'll have the kind of day I want to." Having said which, he died happy. Or, at least, quite pleased with himself. I think the cabbie might have got away with a nice day. If it hadn't been night.

We can't all be Hollywood humorists. It is safer to have a little something in hand that you prepared earlier. In Anne's tricky position, I feel she should have pointed the fish finger, as it were, at the guilty party. Something along the lines of "FIRE THAT F****** FATHEAD TREVOR!" spelled out in fish fingers. The O of Trevor might have presented difficulties, but it should have been possible to improvise with a beefburger and punctuate the whole thing perfectly with frozen prawns.

As it was, they found her the next day. Speechless, seated and solid as rock, like the statue of Abraham Lincoln. The fact that she was sitting down has worried me all week. How long will it take to defrost her, or will she need a specially shaped, sit-in coffin?

Freshco's regional manager was cold and stiff about the whole contretemps, though less so than Anne, naturally. He said, "The whole episode was something of a fiasco. Not the way Freshco likes to conduct business."

You could sense he wasn't pleased. He urged Alma (who once played Cleopatra in Carry On Cleo and whose big, round eyes can still express saucer surprise) to say nothing to the press.

Fat, I would have said, chance.

A lost tribe in the upper reaches of the Orinoco, who have just discovered fire, will be reading that story within the week. Probably in the paper they are trying to light the fire with.

Inspector Fox, the worst detective in the world, provided Trevor doesn't join the force, fancied Spider as a murder suspect ("Book 'im, Stan'olme!"). Spider's innocence came as a fearful blow to Fox. "I'd quite an intriguing little case on my hands. Blackmail . . . extortion . . . murder. The kind of thing I could take into my retirement and write up into a bestseller."

"Heigh-ho" hung unspoken in the air. You felt for the man. Anne had been sprinkling rat poison around with a lavish hand, for love of Curly Watts. (I hope you won't ask me to elaborate. It's already very elaborate.) Fox found this explanation very hard to swallow. "It fails on one vital point — that anyone in their right mind would find Mr Watts attractive." This is true enough, but of course, Anne Malone wasn't in her right mind.

We never see a slap-up funeral in Coronation Street or Albert Square and that's a pity as Lancashire and the East End of London, better than anywhere else, know how to throw a funeral like a party. As drama funerals are often better value than weddings because there's more involved.

My great-grandfather was a Lancashire mill-owner. His funeral cortège consisted entirely of carriages filled with mistresses, all mentioned lavishly in his will. "And", as my grandmother used to say with emphasis, "No Man Raised His Hat As They Passed." (Hats, little children, were things men put on their heads and lifted when they met a dead body or a woman).

A good time, you feel, was had by all. Especially my great-grandfather.

Brush with the rich

John Singer Sargent glamorised society ladies but something nasty lurked beneath. By **Adrian Searle**

WHILE almost all of John Singer Sargent's paintings, from first to last, might be seen as overt demonstrations of consummate painterly skill, panache and bravura, there is also something deeply unsettling about them. Too much skill, panache and bravura, perhaps.

All those ghastly, simpering upper-class girls whose portraits he painted might be another problem, not to speak of all those relics of Edwardian Empire, posing at their mantelpieces and in their top hats and buttoned coats, buttoned-up even in their souls. And those ghastly rich Americans, smug with money and patronage, slathered in Sargent's stripes. Hmmm. But there are such great moments in Sargent's work that it is difficult to dismiss him. It is better instead to let go of prejudice.

The Sargent retrospective at London's Tate Gallery (until January 17) signals a wider resurgence of interest in the artist, three-quarters of a century after his death. His art-historical rehabilitation is due in part to a change in scholarly attitude, and a suspicion that the history of art and the history of the avant-garde are not necessarily synonymous. This renewed interest in Sargent is also due to a fascination with the glamour of his subjects and their social world.

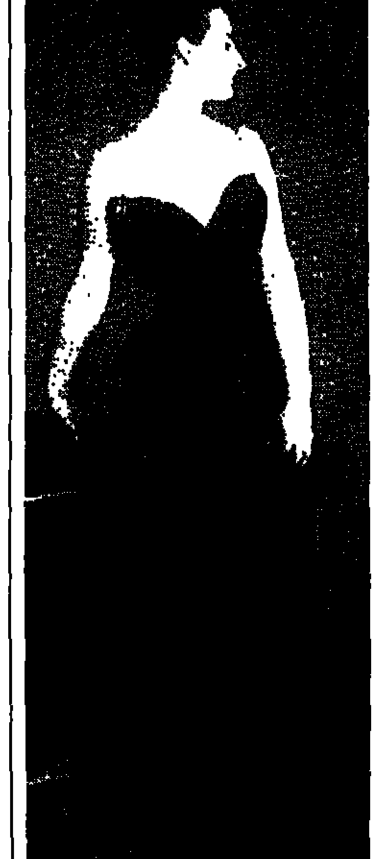
Many of Sargent's paintings appear to be all sheen, all surface and effect. His portraits have been accused of lacking psychological depth and insight, and to go instead for buttery highlights on silk dresses, the make-up rather than the face, the clothes and the pose rather than the man. But aren't Warhol's portraits similarly vacuous? Isn't that vacuity precisely what Warhol was homing in on? Couldn't it be that the lack of identifiable psychic traits in Sargent's portraits is partly due to the way his sitters presented themselves. Couldn't they themselves be part of the problem? Perhaps we are part of the problem too.

How can we tell whether or not a portrait sees into the depths of its subject? A painting, after all, is hardly a psychiatrist's report. Lady Agnew smiles back at us, knowingly. We cannot go behind the smile, and stare at it, perplexed.

There are things in Sargent's oeuvre that appear to be full of some kind of covert social narrative or charge. When Sargent painted Dr Pozzi At Home he showed the handsome young gynaecologist and aesthete (and reputedly abortionist to the wealthy women of the 16th *arrondissement*), in a red dressing gown, embroidered slippers on his feet, one hand to his chest, the other at his belt.

The good doctor's fingers fidget with the slender belt, and with the turn of his collar. Imagine those fingers, imagine where they travel when Pozzi is not at home. The portrait, which otherwise we might see as a bit of old masterly dressing-up, is deeply unsettling.

And what of Madame X, Sargent's full-length portrait of Madame Gautreau, an American like Sargent, and reputedly one of Pozzi's lovers, a portrait that scandalised Paris. The pallor of the painting, one viewer said at the time, made her look decomposed. Sargent accentuated her sexuality, her mannered poise. She let herself be painted with one shoulder strap slipped down . . . And with cleavage! Quelle horreur! It is a self-conscious painting of a self-conscious woman. It is a play on dignity and decorum, on naturalism and artifice. Isn't this how people are, dressed-up, playing at being their public selves, playing at their roles? And Sargent the portraitist, playing at his role too. Later, Sargent painted the strap back where it belonged.



Detail from Madame X, which scandalised Paris

The Tate's exhibition will travel to Washington and Boston, and comes on the heels of a National Gallery of Scotland exhibition last year, centred on Sargent's portrait of Lady Agnew of Lochnaw. That exhibition was all silly swags, flower arrangements and stage-set mock up of the artist's studio in Paris. It reinforced the received perception of the artist as social climber, hobbing with the nobs, showing off his brushwork.

Opinions about Sargent are equivocal. He was a tonal painter who toyed with Impressionism and in some respects debased it. He painted alongside Monet and painted two American presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. He painted Robert Louis Stevenson, languid, long-limbed, long-haired, a cigarette between his long fingers (Stevenson remarked: "It looks damn queer"), and John D Rockefeller (whom Sargent said "looked like a medieval saint"), and he painted his friend and mentor, the author Henry James, twice. A suffragette slashed one of Sargent's portraits of James, though whether this was an act of barbarism or of misplaced literary criticism (it was James's sentences that needed cutting) is unknown.

Sargent himself was sketched by Max Beerbohm, as a bearded human balloon menacing his canvas with a brush in either paw. Beerbohm also drew a cartoon of a queue of wealthy women lined up outside Sargent's Chelsea studio, waiting to be immortalised. Sargent looms behind the curtain, horrified.

As well he might have been. He tired of portraiture — calling them "paugh-traits" — but that was where the money was, and where his reputation lay.

The son of a surgeon who preferred Europe to America, Sargent was born in Florence, spent his youth in the drawing rooms and salons of Italy, Germany, Switzerland and France, and first visited the United States when he was 20. He was an American in Paris and London, in Madrid and Venice: well-read, multilingual, shy, of uncertain sexuality, something of a glutton, a lover of poetry and modern serious music, disorganised to the extent that he was often unsure whether he had been paid or not for various commissions. He was also, from the first, a hugely talented painter. A man, then, of some complexity.

His consummate, incontrovertible skills — social as well as painterly — led him to be offered a knighthood and the presidency of the Royal Academy. He turned down both (his nationality, he claimed, made him ineligible for the knighthood). The thing that really strikes me about Sargent is his rootlessness, which perhaps goes some way to explaining his gravitation towards the stability of money and class, yet also his ambivalence towards it, something that comes across in his paintings.

His life, along with his work, has been seen as a kind of flashy bravura passage. But it was a life that led him to the world's midden at the end of the first world war. The vast canvas Gassed, in the collection of the Imperial War Museum, depicts blinded, mustard-gassed soldiers leading one another across a field towards a dressing station. The field is littered with bodies with bandaged eyes. When Sargent first went to France he asked naively whether there was fighting on Sundays. In the end he painted what he saw with his own eyes.

One last thing. In 1906 he painted a hotel room, probably in Genoa. It is a view of the room, I assume from the doorway. The room is filled with undersea green light, coming in through the shutters. The bed is ruffled, and there's a a clutter of half-open bags on the floor. I imagine Sargent, about to go out, turning back and looking at the room. And this is what he sees, an image of a rootlessness, of a life on the run. Outside, the social waits: the world of poses and appointments and smiles. This more private world is a bit of a mess, and horribly empty.



Gassed: When Sargent first went to the Western Front, he asked if the war stopped on Sundays

A deluded dream of passion on the Nile

THEATRE
Michael Billington

ANTONY and Cleo? Alan Rickman and Helen Mirren? Shakespeare's great romantic tragedy? It all sounds sexily exciting. In fact, Sean Mathias's production at London's Olivier only rises at the end above a decent dullness: for the most part it offers plodding spectacle rarely informed by powerful passion.

The play itself, for all its cosmic imagery, is really an intimate epic: a study of two people who live in a deluded dream of passion. But here Tim Hatley's set is a vast archway made up of 11 panels that endlessly rise and fall and suggest a mottled map of the eastern world.

Any hint of intimacy is also destroyed in the first moment when Antony's followers bellow their private opinions of the general across the length of the stage. And it is typical that the final scene of Cleopatra's death should take place in a vast monument filled with towering rows of glittering candles.

The dominant influence on Mathias seems to be Cecil B de Mille. Egypt is a place of rugs, candles, goblets and decorative cuties in tasselled bras and diaphanous trousers who accompany Cleo under a silken canopy. But what I miss is a governing concept of the kind found in Peter Hall's 1987 production where hero and heroine were sublime middle-aged fantasists or in Michael Bogdanov's current, much more enjoyable, version at the Hackney Empire, where Antony is a man ill at ease in this world of lust.

What Mathias does have is two fine actors in Rickman and Mirren but they seem to exist on different planes. Rickman is hardly a man enslaved by love. His forte is quiet irony and a melancholic despair; which is why he is good in the scenes of icy courtesy with Octavius and in the final encounters with his soldiers where he sees himself as a mangled shadow awaiting death. But of enthralled lust there is little sign.

Helen Mirren and Alan Rickman, fine actors limited by a plodding production PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MOORE

Likewise Mirren has all the imperiousness, hauteur, self-conscious grandeur of someone who actively relishes the role of queen. There is also a mercurial quick-wittedness; one notices her intimate change of tone after Octavius's departure with "he words me girls, he words me". But, like Rickman, she is at her best as death approaches: in the final scenes she achieves a strange androgyny and becomes all fire and air as she sheds her mortal longings.

The final impression is one of disappointment: spectacle takes precedence over language and the two stars seem to be shadow boxing rather than engaging in genuine confrontation.

Meanwhile Michael Bogdanov's production of the same play, which the English Shakespeare Company has brought to the Hackney Empire in east London, begins very wittily. Tabloid hacks file the latest news-stories to their papers reporting High Jinx Around The Sphinx and the fact that "Fulvia is furious that Antony is said to be red-hot in Alexandria". At once we get a snapshot impression of the play's historical context and a reminder that Antony and Cleopatra's private passion has public repercussions.

The great merit of Bogdanov's updated production — with clocks on the sleekly sliding walls of Yannis Thavoris's set depicting various time zones — is that it makes a complex play extremely clear. You always know what is going on: when, for instance, Antony and Octavius meet for their summit conference, the former's gold braid and the latter's politician's white suit tell us a good deal about their images of themselves.

Cathy Tyson's Cleopatra has a supercharged sexuality and an angry vehemence that, as she sends a messenger reeling, recalls her namesake Mike. But, for some reason, she is forced to deliver the text on a note of breathless urgency. If only Ms Tyson would let the words do the work, her performance would be twice as effective.

Tim Woodward's Antony, however, offers a strong portrait of a soldier caught up in the toils of passion. Woodward, for all his fervid mauling of Tyson, also intriguingly suggests a man out of his erotic depth: he seems more at ease grappling on the floor with Pompey, and when, after the defeat at Actium, he talks of "the abysm of hell" he unequivocally grabs Cleopatra's crotch. This, you feel, is an Antony at home in a man's world.

In all, an effective and enjoyable production; but, in his determination to keep the action moving, Bogdanov sometimes sacrifices language and the drowsy languor of the East.

Dancing with death

The Royal Ballet must not perish because of others' incompetence, writes **Judith Mackrell**

IT SHOULD have been the most sentimental of returns — the Royal Ballet going back to dance in its original home after an absence of 50 years. But in place of the anticipated cosy reunion at Sadler's Wells, last week's audience was being leafleted by union reps drumming up a fight for the company's survival. If negotiations over the dancers' contracts are not resolved by January, the Royal will be shut down. In the same year that we've celebrated the centenary of its founder, Ninette de Valois, we may be kissing the company goodbye.

This is a company to be fought for. Not only does it boast high-flying dancers as vividly individual as Darcey Bussell, Sarah Wildor, Jonathan Cope and guests Sylvie Guillem and Irek Mukhamedov, but it arguably performs the most varied repertoire of classic and modern ballets in the world.

In its first programme of the season the Royal boldly states that it, at least, believes in its own future, for there is not a tutu nor a note of Tchaikovsky on view. With the exception of MacMillan's Concerto (1966), all five works on show are contemporary. Three were made this year, and one, by Ashley Page, looks like a potential classic.

Room Of Cooks is a masterfully compressed dance drama whose nervy images of eroticism and violence were inspired by the dark, secretive narratives of painter Stephen Chambers. A woman and two men occupy a kitchen, with a meat cleaver in the table drawer, and as they prowl around each other, brief, ferocious passages of dance combine with Orlando Gough's insinuating score to evoke the heat and danger of sexual tension. The action is tantalisingly equivocal, and at no point do we know exactly what is fantasy and what reality. Yet the electric charge of skin against skin that crackles through the emotional shadows is real and hair-raising.

This combination of psychological ambiguity and physical immediacy could only be achieved in dance, yet what's also impressive about the piece is that it never makes us think in terms of other ballets. Its tautly composed scenes have a painterly resonance, while the steady, remorseless sweep of its action is like a virtuoso camera take.

Cathy Marston's duet, Words Apart, is less ambitious but achieves a similar complexity. While its two dancers, Deborah Bull and Jonathan Cope, move as if gripped by insatiable desire, the choreography poignantly shows that this is a relationship out of synch. The woman averts her head at crucial balances or pushes away from him with her arms even as her torso yields to his embrace.

William Tuckett's Puirt-a-Beul is by contrast a lively dance set to Celtic mouth music. There are moments where its fresh-faced innocence is in danger of collapsing into tweeness. But the rhythmic complexity of the choreography deftly undercuts its surface naivety, and allows the engaging sophistication of the six dancers to shine through.

The whole company was having to perform under trying circumstances (the backstage area of the Wells is still unfinished and the stage is finely coated with dust) and at first it looked as if the dancers might be sinking under the weight of everyone else's mess. In the first movement of Concerto, Justine Meissner, a dancer with a potential for virtuosity, seemed overwhelmed by nerves and when he aimed too high in a couple of moves, he was unable to steady himself. But Wildor flared through the music with her usual blithe energy, and in the second movement Mara Galeazzi and Michael Nunn wove a trance around themselves, with some of Galeazzi's long tilted balances so serenely extended that she appeared to be levitating.

The performances got better and better, to the point where they even managed to overcome my usual scepticism towards the final work, Forsythe's In The Middle. In this, Carlos Acosta, the Royal's newest male principal, proved to be a powerfully muscular dancer with a startling capacity for speed, while the pairing of Bussell and Bull in the ballerina roles was perfect. Bull's phrasing was sharply intelligent as always, and Bussell's performance was the leanest and meanest I've seen from her, combining her frank physical daring with a glitteringly mischievous hauteur.

It takes years to build up a ballet company. The suggestion that the Royal can somehow be put on hold while the Opera House sorts itself out is nearly as damaging as the idea that the company should be forced into permanent closure.

One of the more abrasive passages in Forsythe's ballet provoked a man near me to make a blatantly huffy exit. A bit of audience outrage. It was almost as cheering a sign as all the applause.

Volume control

CINEMA
Gaby Wood

IT MUST be one of the hardest things for an actor to play a lapsed phoney. But that is exactly what Toni Colette does in Velvet Goldmine, piling repentant normality on to exhilarated pretentiousness.

She plays Mandy Slade, an American girl turned London club diva and rock star wife. In a graceful reworking of the bar scenes in Citizen Kane, where the drink-sodden ex remembers a life of improbable grandiosity, Goldmine director Todd Haynes shows Mandy Slade, now a washed-up divorcee, in sour reminiscence.

What she is remembering, for the benefit of a journalist, is the glam rock scene of the 1970s — the excesses, the excitement, the end. She tells the hack she doesn't have what he's looking for. He says her smile tells him she does. "Well," she counters, "smiles lie." The journalist is ready: "Exactly."

Velvet Goldmine is all about appearances — the glittering style of seventies, and the liberation that was to be found in the exuberance of looks. The film is a hymn to that glamour, and to a time when uncertainty could be paraded: being gay or bisexual, dressing up, wearing lipstick were all prerequisites of the new decadence.

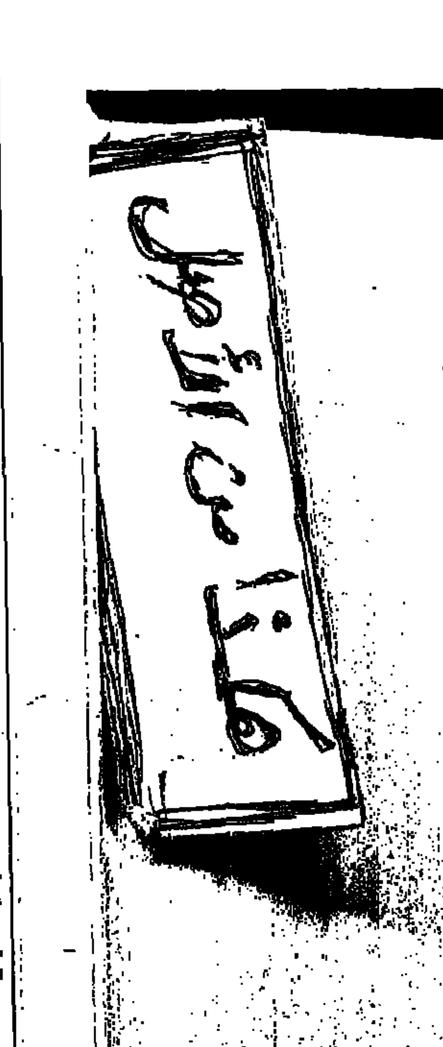
Brian Slade, a rock idol of Ziggy Stardust qualities and proportions, is assassinated on stage. The killing turns out to have been a publicity stunt, but Slade never resurfaces. Ten years later, an English journalist working in New York is asked to track him down.

Arthur (Christian Bale) lived uncomfortably through those times. He thought he'd settled happily into the bleak sell-out of the 1980s. But there was something, as he puts it, spooking him back. As he looks for the truth, we see the seventies replayed to an addictive soundtrack.

Velvet Goldmine has more than one hero. There's not just Brian Slade, played iconically by Jonathan Rhys Meyers, there's Curt Wild, the screaming rock star he falls in love with. (Ewan McGregor, who plays Wild, is strangely weak.) There's the Edith Sitwell lookalike Jack Fairy, said to be the first of the glitterers ("everyone stole from Jack"). There's Mandy, a legend in her own right, and there's Arthur, growing up in the north of England and giving us the fan's view.

These people are not just characters, they are heroes — because it's in the nature of the period portrayed that they will all fight for the audience's attentions. And so Velvet Goldmine turns out to do more than tell a story. It gives a picture of a time, seen from many angles and with all the confusions that entails.

But its most charming attribute is the casualness of its humour. The first frame is words: "Though what you are about to see is fiction," it reads, "it should nevertheless be played at maximum volume."





Mods in swinging London sign a petition to restore the death penalty PHOTO: HULTON PICTURE LIBRARY

Swinging both ways

Veronica Horwell

All Dressed Up
by Jonathon Green
Jonathan Cape 482pp £17.99

The Sixties
by Arthur Marwick
Oxford 903pp £25

I DON'T believe in the sixties. I didn't see any such thing. That is, I'm sceptical of theories of the period, most of which seem to be later rationales for a collective delusion — shared by those who were young then and doing nicely thank you (bar the acne) — that they had a close encounter with something which remains deeply meaningful to us all. Me, I think it was a collision/collusion of demographics and economics, which any decently reticent historian wouldn't dare analyse for a century, if ever.

Which isn't to say I don't enjoy reading evidence of the sixties manifestations, like Jonathon Green's fragments of testimony from, say, one Mick Farren, remembering the riot in Grosvenor Square in 1968: "There was a thunder of hooves and we were in the middle of the Charge of the Light Brigade, which was fucking scary. What little I knew, from Napoleonic history, was get under a tree, because it's very hard to swing one of those truncheons when you're on a horse and the other guy is under a tree." Though that sounds more like a damn close-run thing than a close encounter.

This is Green's third book on the era, defined crisply as 1964-71, and set mostly within a possible drive of London by Mini. Green knows what preceded his chosen world, and so can put in their context of continuing, increasing middle-class money, the media, fashion and music which were promoted (then and now) as a new revolution. I trust his reporting. Minimal editorials. He's just recording the memories before they finally fade to past. All of them, especially the daft bits, such as the aristo Maldwyn Thomas (not likely to be on the bin-round with a name like that, is he?) who joined the upper-class gypsies at Glastonbury: "I was round at Mark Palmer's flat in Radnor Walk [Chelsea], and he said 'I'm going to drop out, do you want to come?' We caught the train to Didcot . . ." Or the filmed five days of stoned partying with steaks laid on by the caterers, and the lays laid on by everybody, which were cut into a 30-second sequence of Antonioni's movie Blow-Up. If that.

Green is at his most cruelly acute in a single page, where he quotes a Jonathan Aitken piece about 28-year-old Kevin MacDonald and his smart club, Sibylla's.

The Aitken interview is merciless — I had no idea he was ever this sharp: "We've got everyone here (MacDonald clicked his fingers to emphasise the point) . . . We're completely classless. We're completely integrated. We dig the spades, man. Everyone here's got the message (click). Can you read it, man? We've married up the hairy brigade — that's the East End kids like photographers and artists, with the smooth brigade, the aristos, the guards officers . . . it's the greatest, happiest, most swinging ball of the century and I started it."

And then Green coolly trumps Aitken. "Mr MacDonald did not make 29; he killed himself later that year."

After which true high meaninglessness, it's a slow go through Arthur Marwick's emphatic validation over 900 very odd pages of his introductory 16 statements of development — "a very Stonehenge of assertion" — of trends across the Western world between 1958 and 1974. His timeframe and space parameters fray and sag as you read. Marwick can discover (though usually in the archives) the absolute moment of change in a life, as in his tragi-comedic *trouvée* from a peasant family near Rome in 1969 when an inside toilet had been installed where before they had used fields: "I feel like a human being, like other people, not like an animal as I felt before."

And yet every sentence in which he interprets, analyses and extrapolates is flaccid. He wombles. Not because he accepts the Rashomon school of history — all accounts are equal in their subjectivity; nor that he acknowledges the cultural pluralism tending to chaos that may have been the real change which happened to happen (demographics and commerce again) in the sixties.

When I at last stumbled into his chapter entitled "Beauty, Booze and the Built Environment" — quite as dire as those words promise — I suddenly recalled that this was the Professor Marwick who had given us his previous thoughts on the subject in his volume Beauty In History, which Angela Carter described as "Women I, Arthur, have fancied throughout the ages with additional notes on some of the men I think I might have fancied if I were a woman." Ah, that's it, then. This is the sixties which Arthur fancied, the happenings made mightily meaningful by arrangement in retrospect, so that they weren't merely the byproduct of 25 years of post-war capitalism expanding its markets among those whom Pete Townshend of The Who called "the Bulge — the result of all the the old soldiers coming back from war and screwing until they were blue in the face". And that terrific line is to be found in Green, of course. You wouldn't find a hormonal academic actually listening to a Mod-pleaser.

If you would like to order All Dressed Up for £15 or The Sixties for £21 see the CultureShop ad (below)...

Intellectual bullying of a philosophical kind

Nicholas Lezard

Confessions of a Philosopher
by Bryan Magee
Phoenix 498pp £8.99 pbk

A MILDLY misleading title, but we'll let that pass; think of it as a philosophical autobiography. It begins with Magee, as a child, coming to realise that everything he knows of the world exists only in his head: "I was inundated by crashing great tidal waves of nausea, claustrophobia, and isolation, as if I were for ever cut off from everything that existed — apart from myself — and as if I were trapped for life inside my own head. I thought I was going to throw up or faint." It's a startling opening, and all the more so because it describes the feeling so lucidly that you start to know, all too well, what he means. (I recommend you do not start reading it at bedtime. Lying in the dark with these words echoing in your skull is no fun.)

Eventually Magee found people who would be up to talking about such matters, but the rest of the story of his life is largely filled with people he cannot, intellectually, take seriously. "They seemed to think that the world was an intelligible place, and I did not see how in the light of a moment's thought this belief could be entertained," runs one typically caustic line.

Studying Greats at Oxford after the war, he is driven to despair by the smugness and complacency of his teachers, all logical positivists who spent more time discussing terminology and linguistics than the proper concerns of philosophy ("superficial" and "irrelevant" are among the kinder words Magee uses when writing about them).

Much of the book is written with what might look, at first glance, like extraordinary arrogance. It looks like it on second and third glances too, come to think of it. "Of the religions I studied, the one I found least worthy of intellectual respect was Judaism." Don't worry — he's not in the slightest degree an anti-semite — but saying something like that takes, well, *chutzpah*.

He is withering on people who fail to appreciate Karl Popper's genius, and frank about his closeness to the man and his own intellectual robustness in arguing with him. Very frank. ("I stood up to his intellectual bullying and hit back hard.") Although devoted to Popper, he says of his Realism And The Aim Of Science that "parts of it read like someone who has not been properly understood repeating himself in the hope that if he does his message will get through." This was a somewhat surprising sentence to come across as it could be applied, without alteration, to Magee's own book.

What Magee tells us, again and again, is this: that the central task of philosophy is to ask, *What, ultimately, is there?* And this, with variations of expression: "I hold the greatest single achievement in the history of philosophy to be Kant's distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal." Again, don't worry: he explains this, too.

There is something slightly crazy about the whole book. But it is a very illuminating craziness. It works not only as autobiography but as an introduction to the philosophies of Kant, Hume and Schopenhauer. You might think that this is hardly going to make you put it on your Christmas list, but there is something to be commended in the way he skates over the details of his public life (he was a Labour MP until 1983) at the expense of his own inner philosophical wrangles. Which are not about mere details: they are about the Big One: What can we know?

Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

Casanova's Return to Venice, by Arthur Schnitzler (Pushkin Press, £7)

IN THIS novella, Schnitzler, the Viennese master of disillusion, sends Casanova back to face his past. The authorities will have him back if he works for them in their campaign against moral corruption. But there are other humiliations in store for the great lover as old age casts its debilitating shadow on his seductions — a new love, still more deception and a duel with an officer who could be his young self.

Elephant, by Raymond Carver (Harvill, £6.99)

THE "American Chekhov", it says on the cover, and the compliment is not absurd. These seven stories, the last that Carver wrote, often seem to be stories about nothing very much at all as characters don't quite say what they mean or refrain from saying what they could say. Yet things do get said amongst all the nothing, and impulses give the lie to what was masquerading as truth.

Cult Fiction, A Reader's Guide, by Andrew Calcutt and Richard Shephard (Prion, £9.99)

SO WHO qualifies? Charles Bukowski ("the dirty old man of American letters") and Fyodor Dostoevsky ("miserabilism writ large"). Cult fiction is, the authors own, "a shaky concept at best and in no way finally quantifiable". Their choice of authors shows the concept in full wobble but it doesn't much matter as the introductions are nicely judged.

Fatherhood: An Anthology of New Writing, edited by Peter Howarth (Indigo, £6.99)

LOOK, girls, you may actually have the baby but it's us boys who deliver the book. Tony Parsons "reflects on the influence of his own dad"; Nicholas Lezard describes the gulf between those who have a baby on board and those who don't; Neil Spencer explains why you'll never be as hip as your kids, and so on. If you are a dad-to-be, you should read it now. It could be the last book you read in the next five years...

A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam, by Neil Sheehan (Pimlico, £12.50)

JOHN PAUL VANN went to Vietnam to fight what he thought was a just war. He was sickened to discover that his own army was corrupt, that the South Vietnamese soldiers casually slaughtered civilians. He was brave enough not to keep his mouth shut and to put right before the might of the military. Sheehan's book is widely regarded as one of the best Vietnam war books.

Redemption in Cajun country

Maya Jaggi

A Lesson Before Dying
by Ernest J Gaines
Serpent's Tail 256pp £9.99 pbk

IN LOUISIANA'S Cajun country in the late 1940s, a jury of "twelve white men good and true" puts a [illegible] on death row. His lawyer's defence: that Jefferson, [illegible] field hand wrongly convicted of a fatal liquor-store robbery, is a subhuman beast of burden incapable of premeditation — "I would just as soon put a hog in the electric chair as this." In an inexorable tale that holds no hope of reprieve from white justice, Jefferson's ageing nanna, Miss Emma, calls on the plantation schoolteacher to help her godson die with dignity, like a man not a hog.

From this devastatingly stark material, Ernest J Gaines has created a powerful and loving portrait of a small, mainly cane-cutting community. It is told by the reluctant hero [illegible] who has returned from university to teach [illegible] thing that an educated black man can do in the South today") after losing his faith.

In language as direct and unembellished as the pleas of the stubborn and stoical Miss Emma and Tante Lou, the novel reveals the attrition of insults — being made to enter by back doors, to stand, to wait — from those "playing by the rules their forefathers created hundreds of years ago". The sheriff's cronies in the antebellum big house place bets on whether the "too smart" teacher can perform the impossible with the crushed Jefferson.

Gaines, who grew up on a Louisiana plantation, evokes the claustrophobia of "the quarter", as Grant despairs at his pupils' options: being "brought down to the level of beasts [illegible] flight to violent death or jail in the cities. Though first seen striking his charges with a ruler, Grant stays for the reason his lover Vivian Baptiste divines: "You love them more than you hate this place." While the teacher disavows God, and Reverend Ambrose envies his tutelage of Jefferson ("Lord just work for white folks"), the novel is couched in religious symbolism: the convict grasps he is being asked to "take the cross". Grant understands the yearning for a secular messiah: "We black men have failed to protect our women since the time of slavery. We stay here in the South and are broken, or we run away . . . So each time a male child is born, they hope he will be the one to change the vicious circle."

[illegible] civil rights in the 1960s, and Gaines has Jefferson assert his humanity partly through literacy — keeping a diary — as slave narrators did before abolition. Yet demoralised people have their own need of heroes. As Grant recalls of Joe Louis's ascent: "For days after that fight, for weeks, we held our heads higher than any people on earth had ever done."

In Grant Wiggins, Gaines has created a Socratically gifted but self-doubting mentor, reminiscent of Walter Mosley's Socrates Fortlow in Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned (1997). That contemporary African-American writers should create two such pedagogic figures at one time underlines an urgency implicit in Gaines's novel: that the "vicious circle" is still not yet broken. Far from [illegible] not without glimmers of humour, A Lesson Before Dying is a transcendent and heartfelt novel of redemption.

Mass grave at Pilice collective farm near Srebrenica, Bosnia, 1997 PHOTOGRAPH: GILLES PERESS/MAGNUM

Dead men tell no lies

Peter Beaumont

The Graves
by Eric Stover and Gilles Peress
Scalo 334pp £16.95

WE HAVE grown too comfortable with horror. Murder and genocide have become too much like entertainment. Somewhere the real significance has been mislaid: the smell, texture and psychological awfulness of mass slaughter and its aftermath.

And we grow bored with it. Already the urbicides of Vukovar and Mostar — the genocide at Srebrenica — have been filed away, put away under the heading "finished business" as the world moves on to some new catastrophe.

But for the relatives of more than 7,000 men and boys who disappeared after the fall of Srebrenica and the hundreds of men massacred after the fall of Vukovar an issue remains. That of closure and retribution. This also is the business of Clyde Snow and William Haglund, forensic anthropologists and servants of a wider international desire for the same closure and retribution. Their job is the unspeakable — the extraction and identification of the decomposing corpses from the mass graves of the former Yugoslavia.

Like sunken lumber the bodies are still rising to the surface to be tagged and sorted for disposal and to accuse their killers. In Bosnia 400 mass graves have been identified, the most recent — and largest to date — emerging only last month. Each is a signpost on the Balkan map, evidence of the execution en masse of prisoners of war, or civilian men and boys who were simply murdered for being of fighting age.

It is the kind of investigation we accept the necessity of without asking too many questions about the process and about the men and women who perform it. But The Graves — the account of Eric Stover and Gilles Peress of the excavation of the war graves of Srebrenica and Vukovar — for all its awfulness of incidental detail, must also rank as one of the most powerful and affecting accounts of the Yugoslav wars. Above all it is an indictment of war.

It is also a timely reminder of the real issues that confront us in taking on Milosevic and of the acts that have been perpetrated in the name of Serbia's most rabid nationalism.

Peress's award-winning photographs, and Stover's cool, unhysterical prose, take you to the most awful place on earth, beyond even Dante's imagination. They take you to the reality of the pit. It is here that forensic pathologists go about their work. But despite the horror of the subject matter and Peress's images there is a strange gentleness about the photographs which reminds us that these were, after all, once men.

For this is a book that is as much about the living as the dead. It is about the reclamation of the missing dead not just as individuals but as a group. Most powerful of all is Stover's account of the march from Srebrenica to the haven of Tuzla, harried all the way through the dark Bosnian woods by Serbian forces. Fathers lose sons and sons lose fathers. Serbs kill and — almost inexplicably — amid the mayhem they reprieve.

Such a case is described by Ahmed. "My father was just ahead of me. In front of the tank, he turned to the left with the other men. Without thinking, I continued walking straight ahead with the women and children. After a few yards a hand reached out and grabbed my right shoulder. It was a Serb soldier, a neighbour of mine from Srebrenica. He shoved a blanket in my arms and motioned for me to put it on my head. He literally saved my life."

But The Graves is more than simply a terrible book of blinding humanity. It is a text that should be read by every goon with a gun. It should be read too by the politicians who command them as a lesson in the modern science of forensics and satellite photography.

Its message is quite simple. You can murder your enemies, but you cannot hide the bodies or the manner of the death. In those scraps and fragments in the pit reside narratives that can be decoded and can ultimately condemn through blindfolds and bound hands. How bodies fell. How they were murdered.

"Bones," says Clyde Snow, "are often our last best witnesses: they never lie, and they never forget."

The selfish geneticist

Steven Rose

Unweaving the Rainbow
by Richard Dawkins
Penguin Press 336pp £20

RICHARD DAWKINS may well be the best-known zoologist in Britain. Not perhaps so much for his zoology, as he stopped laboratory and field research many years ago, but for the elegance and power of his popular science writing.

A vigorous defender of fundamentalist Darwinian orthodoxy against all comers — biologists and non-biologists alike — he has a capacity to coin phrases that have resonated through the general culture. So when Microsoft's Charles Simonyi founded a chair in the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, Richard Dawkins was a favoured candidate for it. Unweaving The Rainbow is the new professor's tribute to his sponsor.

Over the last decade his uncompromising assertion of Darwinian orthodoxy has broadened into a defence of scientific rationality in general. Challenged by those who claim that science demystifies the universe and therefore robs it of its beauty, Dawkins insists that knowledge adds rather than detracts. To learn that the colours of the rainbow result from separating white light into its component wavelengths should not diminish our appreciation of its romance, even if we no longer hope to find a crock of gold at the end. He is of course right, though he might perhaps have been prepared to concede that it takes two to tango, and that scientists have often been as enthusiastic about proclaiming their macho reductionist rejection of that romance as their detractors have been to decry scientific "objectivity".

To demonstrate that scientists can indeed vault the snow-line between the two cultures, Dawkins interweaves his account of the physics of light with a trawl through the Golden Treasury of 19th century English poetry, to find Keats, Wordsworth and Coleridge reflecting diversely on both the beauty and terror that Newtonian physics inspires. But his belief that scientists can cross the divide, even if arts people consistently fail to make the leap in the opposite direction, would carry more conviction if his literary tastes were less overtly rooted in the past. With contemporary writers, such as A S Byatt and Ian McEwan, so warmly embracing science within their novels, it seems a bit churlish to continue to play the two cultures game in this embattled way.

One of the great attractions of Dawkins's own writing is its combination of clarity of exposition with a brilliant use of metaphor. His latest is the bar-code: dark lines in the light spectrum indicate the presence of elements in distant stars; dark lines on a photographic plate form DNA fingerprints. The former show the power of scientific interpretation, the latter are a peg on which to hang a polemic against a legal system and popular culture which can't or won't understand probability theory.

However, his more conciliatory cultural forays occupy only the violet region of Dawkins's rainbow. The greater part of the spectrum is occupied by attempts to slay some familiar dragons. Newspaper columnists like Bernard Levin who are contemptuous of arcane cosmological matters, astrologers, the X Files — all are subjected to withering scorn. The credulity of the unscientific masses in accepting such tosh moves him nearly to despair.

For someone who complains that his own science is so persistently misunderstood, Dawkins is remarkably intolerant of other fields of research and knowledge. His distaste for biologists who regard living processes as more than the mere working out of instructions carried by individual selfish genes is well displayed. A particular *bête rouge* is Stephen Jay Gould, perhaps because he is one of the few who can write as elegantly as Dawkins himself.

Outside the scientific citadel he has little time for sociologists, philosophers or literary critics — especially feminists and those who have had the audacity to fret over the validity of science's claims to have a unique purchase on truth. However, so strong is his disdain for these scholars that he is not prepared to enter into reasoned debate with them. Indeed, he gives little sign that he has actually read anything they have written. Instead he prefers to operate *ad hominem*, quoting unattributable and unspecified friends who have reported to him allegedly stupid things that unnamed sociologists have said — anecdotes that those familiar with the Dawkins oeuvre will have heard him repeat, with suitable embellishments, on a number of occasions now.

However, if you want your opponents to respect your own research field, you have a duty to play fair by theirs. There's even a name for this within Dawkins's own fundamentalist Darwinian credo. It is called reciprocal altruism, and in fitness terms it can be shown to be beneficial. Richard Dawkins's problem is that he seems to lack the genes for it.

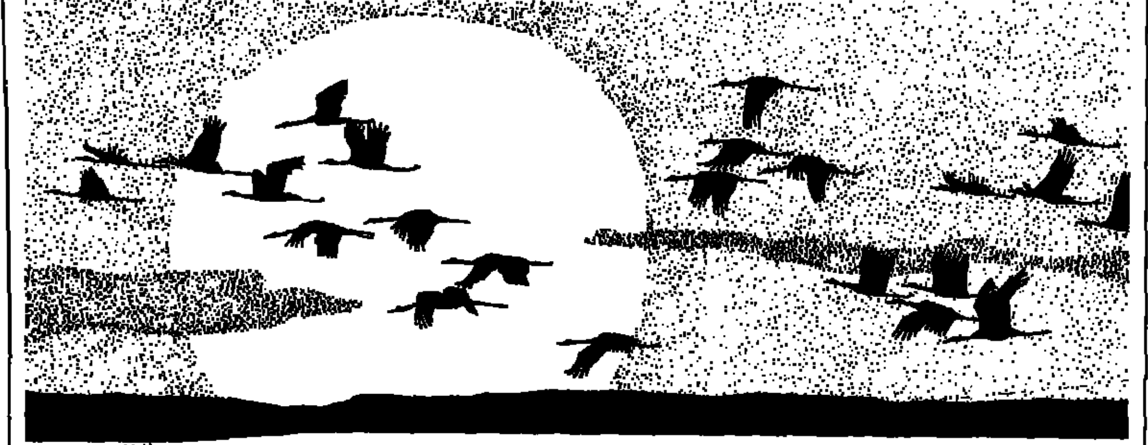


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Hooked by the cranes

Mark Cocker

AS I WRITE, five feathers lie before me across the desk. All are about 20cm long and 5cm wide, and to anyone else they probably look rather uninspiring, uniformly grey quills, except that two have small areas of black towards the tips.

They are the feathers of common cranes. I found them several days ago, where the birds dropped them, at a spot called Angyalaháza, which forms part of the Hortobágy National Park in eastern Hungary, one of the most intact and atmospheric areas of central European steppe left on the continent. The place has recently acquired additional importance as a staging post for huge numbers of migratory cranes. Up to 65,000 of these massive birds, and perhaps as much as a quarter of the world's entire population, converge on the Hungarian wetland before passing down to the tip of Italy, then across the Mediterranean for their winter quarters in Algeria, Tunisia and even as far south as Ethiopia.

My five feathers are a symbolic link with this ancient journey, which probably has its origins at the end of the last Ice Age. But they also connect me to the other part of the crane's annual life cycle — their months on the breeding grounds in northern Europe. These feathers carry in their numerous tiny imperfections a coded history of a crane's summer. The irregularly tattered fringes and faintly soiled bloom were acquired by daily wear and tear among the boggy meadows of eastern Poland, the boreal forests and lakes of subarctic Scandinavia or the Russian taiga.

My five plumes also speak obliquely of another crucial ritual in a crane's life — the moult of flight feathers. Every two to four years all cranes lose those feather-tracts known to the layperson as pinions (and to ornithologists as primaries and secondaries) — the great black quills that permit the bird to undertake its heroic odyssey back and forth from Africa. When these are shed they fall in summer during a 48-hour period. However, my five feathers, known as coverts, never moult at that moment since they overlay and protect the bird's primaries during the critical period of re-growth.

Only when the main wing feathers are renewed can the crane afford to lose these coverts, which they do halfway through their migration on the plains of Hungary. By gathering five of them up at the Angyalaháza *puszta* I intervened in their natural destiny to return to the alkaline soils of the steppe, or perhaps even survive the winter to be recycled as a soft lining for the spring eggs of other breeding birds. But mine now serve a more personal, complicated function — reawakening memories of their owners as they came to roost in the innermost section of the park.

Towards dusk the initially small and intermittent formations of cranes began to link up into larger silhouetted clusters. Often these appeared as a gigantic, slow-moving amoeba expanding and contracting above the horizon, depending on how the birds changed direction in relation to where we stood. Sometimes there were so many in the sky they formed an almost continuous front through 180 degrees.

As they came closer the flocks gradually swung round, and one by one each individual would peel away from the undifferentiated mass of heaving wings and bodies, until they created a graceful, evenly spaced skein right across the skyline. All the while these thousands of birds maintained a loud, sonorous bugling that seemed a distilled essence of that northern European wilderness from which they had arrived. And as I witnessed this sublime spectacle I gathered up my five feathers to help chronicle its meaning.

Chess Leonard Barden

WHILE Russia and the United States scrapped for gold medals in the Olympiad at Elista, England never justified their status as No 2 seeds: Michael Adams's 2700 rating is in danger after his subdued performance on top board, Nigel Short drew eight in a row. On the credit side, Matthew Sadler (7½/12) was again the team rock while Tony Miles (5/7) should have been recalled years ago.

The basic problem is that in the 1980s England had a young team which overperformed and won three silver medals, while the higher-rated but ageing 1990s squad has underperformed, apart from Pula 1997, when the opposition was weak.

M Sadler v J Lautier

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 c5 6 Nf3 b6 7 0-0 Bb7 8 Na4 Qe7 9 a3 Ba5 10 b3 d5 11 Bb2 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nbd7 13 Rc1 Rfd8 14 Qe2 a6 15 Bd3 Bd5 16 dxc5 b5 17 b4 bxa4 18 c6! Bb6 19 cxd7 a5 20 bxa5 Rxa5 21 e4 Ba8 22 Ne5 Nxd7 23 Nc4 Ra7 24 Nxb6 Nxb6 25 Bb5 Nd7 26 Rfd1 Nf8 27 f3 h6 28 Qc4 Rc7 29 Qxa4 Rxc1 30 Rxc1 Qg5 31 Bf1 Rd2 32 Qb3 Ng6 33 Rc8+ Kh7 34 Bc1 Nf4 35 g3 Resigns.

The best match score by any British Isles team at Elista was Ireland 2½, Poland 1½. The all-Ireland team were without their strongest player, the former Russian GM Alex Baburin, while the new top board Mark Orr had to abandon the trip because of a family illness. Ireland had to play many rounds without a reserve, and were outrated by the Poles by around 200 points a board.

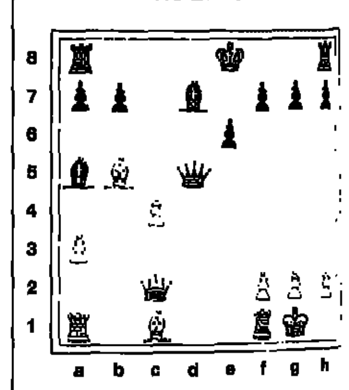
So a great victory, especially for the 20-year-old Cambridge student Brian Kelly from Belfast who is carving a reputation with his impressive positional style.

B Kelly v M Krasenkov

1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 e6 4 Nf3 d5 5 0-0 Bd6 6 c4 c6 7 b3 Qe7 8 Ne5 0-0 9 Bb2 b6 10 cxd5 cxd5? 11 Nc4! Nc6 12 Nxd6 Qxd6 13 Nc3 Ba6 14 a4 Rfe8 15 Ba3 Qd7 16 Qd2 Ne4 17 Nxe4 dxe4 18 Rfd1 Na5 19 Rab1 Qd5 20 f3 Bb7 21 fxe4 fxe4 22 Bb4 Nc6 23 Bc3 Ne7 24 Rf1 Qh5 25 Bb4 Nf5 26 Rf4! Qg6 27 Rbf1 h5 28 d5? Rd8 29 Bxe4 Bxd5 30 Bxd5 [illegible] Resigns.

Torquay has lost next year's European team championships after the Fide congress in Elista voted to hold the event at a rouble-based site, probably St Petersburg. The BCF wanted teams to pay for their own accommodation (as they did when England won the European title at Pula 1997), but the rouble's collapse meant that teams from the former Eastern bloc would have had to find several times the originally planned amount of $1,000 a head. Fide has set a dubious precedent that may deter Western nations from hosting major team events.

No 2547



From a Scottish postal game where Black (to play) is a pawn up but behind in development. He can offer a queen swap by 1 . . . Qf5, but a grandmaster recommended 1 . . . Qh5, so Black decided to follow authority. What happened next?

No 2546: 1 Rd6 (threat 2 Rd2 and 3 Ra2) exd6 2 Qh8 and 3 Qa1 or 3 Qxb2. If 1 . . . Ne4 2 Qxb3+ Kxb3 3 Rd3 mate.

Quick crossword no. 442

Across

1 How disgusting! (4)
3 Deep (8)
8 It has length but no breadth (4)
9 Draw near (8)
11 A very close-run thing (5-3-2)
14 Abandon — sand! (6)
15 Distinction — esteem (6)
17 Town — county — palace (10)
20 Net (salary) (4-4)
21 Growth on skin — character flaw (4)
22 Container for sweet food (5,3)
23 Kill (4)

Down

1 Christmas (8)
2 Victory (in love or war?) (8)
4 Mope or fret (6)
5 Area nearest the observer (10)
6 The Mormon state (4)
7 Roald, writer (4)
10 With great care — absolutely (10)
12 Preserve or lay aside (a project or, formerly, clothes) (8)
13 Without delay (8)
16 With hands on hips (6)
18 Craving (4)
19 Hide (4)

Last week's solution

S	W	A	S	H	B	U	C	K	L	I	N	G
H		C		A		N		E		M		A
A	R	C		N	E	W	S	P	A	P	E	R
W		I		D		A		T		E		L
L	A	D	Y	B	I	R	D		A	R	E	A
		E		O		Y		V		C		N
C	A	N	N	O	N		B	E	H	E	A	D
L		T		K		V		R		P		
A	L	P	S		P	E	D	A	N	T	I	C
S		R		S		N		N		I		R
S	H	O	R	T	H	E	A	D		B	O	A
I		N		U		E		A		L		V
C	H	E	D	D	A	R	C	H	E	E	S	E

Bridge Zia Mahmood

BRIDGE can be a cruel game sometimes — the best bids and plays don't lead to the best results, while inferior actions bring bountiful harvests. This deal from a recent World Championship left poor South wondering what on earth he had done to deserve the fate that befell him. Look at the problem from his point of view:

North (dummy)
♠ J 9 8 2
♥ K J 9 8 2
♦ Q
♣ K 4 3

South (you)
♠ A Q 10
♥ A 10 6 5
♦ J 10 7
♣ A J 6

This was the bidding:

South	West	North	East
1NT	3♦	4♦	Pass
4♥	Dble	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The auction has been curious — West's 3♦ overcall was ostensibly weak, so how can he have enough to double you in 4♥ on the next round? Perhaps it's one of these "action doubles" that you've heard about, showing extras for his pre-emptive overcall and hoping that East will do something sensible. On the other hand, maybe it's a variation on the Lightner theme, based on a black-suit void — West is trying to suggest an unusual return should East win an early trick. Whatever you make of the double, West leads the king of diamonds, on which East plays the two, and follows with the nine of diamonds. You to play.

East's two of diamonds is an obvious singleton, so rather than guess how high to ruff in dummy, it might be safer to throw a possible losing club. You do this and, sure enough, East ruffs the nine of diamonds with the four of hearts, and switches to a spade. Another decision for you. You're inclined now to view this double as Lightner, asking not for an unusual lead, but for an unusual switch. West must have a spade void! You finesse the ten of spades with some confidence, but West produces the king. Now, he plays the ace of diamonds. Will this nightmare ever end? You have lost the first three tricks, so you have to do the right thing from here on. What is the heart position? West has eight diamonds, at least one spade as you now know to your cost, and presumably not a void in clubs or he would have led the three of diamonds at the second trick. This means that he is very likely to be short in hearts. He may even be void — perhaps this baffling double was based on the hope that you might encounter a bad trump break. You ruff with dummy's king of hearts, you run the jack of hearts, and . . . West wins it with the queen! You don't need me to tell you that this card was a singleton, for West's hand was:

♠K5 ♥Q ♦AK986543 ♣105

What was his double? It was an absurd, crazy effort that deserved to cost him a redoubled overtrick at least. But he's going back to his team-mates with a song in his heart, while you still have to face yours. Where is the justice in this world?

Rugby League Super League Grand Final: Wigan Warriors 10 Leeds Rhinos 4

Warriors' march of victory

Andy Wilson at Old Trafford

SUPER LEAGUE adopted the Australian idea of a Grand Final to determine the champions, and Wigan and Leeds laid on an Aussie-style war of attrition for the British game's first such climax. It was just a shame they could not arrange Australian-style weather to go with it.

Wigan are worthy champions, as they proved by finishing top of the table after the 23 rounds of the regular season, and with a tough, solid performance last Saturday. It was ferocious and intense, tense and admirable; but in driving rain, an attendance of 43,533 had to settle for largely up-yer-jumper stuff, with one Jason Robinson try and three Andy Farrell goals sufficient for Wigan to take the third Super League title (their first), the winners' cheque of $470,000, and a set of nine-carat gold rings.

After their humiliating defeat by Sheffield in the Challenge Cup final at Wembley in May, the Wigan players could not care about the manner of this victory. They also had a score to settle with Leeds after losing their first two encounters this season, and it was in the forwards, where Australian prop Tony Mestrov was outstanding, that they made the improvement to turn those defeats around.

But they would not have done it without Robinson who, cruelly for the Leeds fans, was poached from under their noses. He was Leeds born and bred, and this performance, which won him the Harry Sunderland Trophy as man of the match, was by no means the first time that he has rubbed his home town club's noses in the dirt.

Leeds were valiant, and for the first quarter dominant, taking a 4-0 lead with a try from Richie Blackmore. But as the game wore on they posed less of a threat, over-reliant on their willing but well-watched captain, Iestyn Harris.

He could not have made a worse start, dropping the ball inside his own half on Leeds' first set of six tackles. However, that error was not costly, and it did not take the Rhinos' skipper long to make amends. He made the first break of the game after 14 minutes of predictable but still breathtakingly bone-crunching defence, and although he missed the first scoring chance, a difficult penalty shot after Mark Bell had fouled Ryan Sheridan at the play-the-ball, he played a key role in the opening try midway through the first half.

The attack was started by Martin Masella, who off-loaded a good ball inside the Wigan half. Terry Newton took the pass and released quickly to Harris, who was steaming up from full-back. His deceptive speed and leg strength allowed him to shrug off Robinson's desperate attempted cover tackle, and although his opposite number Kris Radlinski managed to halt his progress 20 yards out, the damage was done.

Wigan were badly short of numbers on their left, and Daryl Powell and Sheridan merely had to handle efficiently for Blackmore to plunge over for the try.

Harris was unable to convert, again from a difficult angle but still one from which he would expect at least a 50 per cent success rate.

Leeds were well worth their lead, with their forwards establishing the supremacy which had underpinned their home-and-away double over Wigan in the regular season; for Wigan's supporters, it was looking ominously reminiscent of Wembley. Harris created another promising opportunity for Blackmore by running the ball on the last tackle, but the Kiwi fumbled. Leeds were to regret that mistake as Wigan came back into the game in the closing stages of the first half.

They did so on the back of Leeds' handling errors, and also an 8-3 penalty count. There were breaks by Henry Paul and Robinson, easily Wigan's most dangerous attackers, but the Leeds defence held out until the 37th minute. Then it was Robinson who shrugged off a tired attempted tackle from Darren Fleary, and had too much pace for Powell and Harris. Significantly, he touched down between the posts, allowing Farrell an easy conversion to give Wigan the interval lead.

Farrell doubled their advantage to four points five minutes into the second half with a straightforward penalty conceded by Mark Glanville, but earned by a tackle from Mestrov which forced the young Leeds enforcer Adrian Morley to drop the ball.

Wigan appeared to have wrapped up the win with a second try from, of all things, a Neil Cowie bomb, the red-headed prop nonchalantly launching a left-footed kick which Bell gathered to score. But the video referee ruled that Bell had knocked on.

Wigan remained the more likely scorers throughout the closing stages, only heroic Leeds defence denying first Paul Johnson, then Mick Cassidy, and Farrell sealed the win with his third penalty in injury time.

Thick-skinned Rhino . . . the Leeds substitute Jamie Mathiou hangs on to Henry Paul of Wigan during a gripping final PHOTO: MIKE HEWITT

Football

Rangers win

RANGERS slipped comfortably into the final of the Scottish League Cup on November 29 by beating Airdrie 5-0, *writes Patrick Glenn*. With defeat for their team all but assured by the interval, following goals from Jonatan Johansson and the substitute Ian Ferguson, the Airdrie fans chanted the theme from The Great Escape for much of the second half.

However, it was never likely to be an appropriate anthem as Rangers added three more goals through Gordon Durie and a brace from Rod Wallace to complete the rout. Rangers will meet the winners of this week's match between Hearts and St Johnstone.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Aston Villa 1, Leicester 1; Blackburn 1, Arsenal 2; Charlton 4, West Ham 2; Derby 1, Man Utd 1; Leeds 0, Chelsea 0; Liverpool 5, Nottm Forest 1; Sheff Wed 0, Everton 0; Southampton 2, Coventry 1; Tottenham 2, Newcastle 0; Wimbledon 2, Middlesbrough 2.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
First Division
Barnsley 2, Portsmouth 1; Bradford C 1, C Palace 1; Crewe 1, Tranmere 4; Norwich 4, Huddersfield 1; Oxford 0, Sheffield Utd 2; QPR 0, Birmingham 1; Stockport 0, Ipswich 1; Sunderland 1, Bury 0; Swindon 2, WBA 2; Watford 2, Port Vale 2; Wolves 2, Grimsby 0.

Second Division
Blackpool P, Chesterfield P; Colchester A, Bournemouth A; Fulham 4, Walsall 1; Gillingham 1, Luton 0; Macclesfield 2, Burnley 1; Man C 0, Reading 1; Northampton 1, Preston 1; Notts Co 1, Bristol R 1; Oldham 0, Wycombe 0; Stoke 2, Wigan 1; Wrexham 0, Millwall 0; York P, Lincoln P.

Third Division
Barnet 0, Brighton 1; Cambridge 0, Shrewsbury 0; Carlisle P, Cardiff P; Darlington P, Exeter P; Hartlepool 4, Torquay 1; Hull 1, Southend 1; L Orient 1, Halifax 0; Mansfield P, Peterborough P; Plymouth P, Chester P; Rochdale P, Scarborough P; Scunthorpe 4, Rotherham 3; Swansea P, Brentford P.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE CUP
Semi-final
Rangers 5, Airdrie 0.

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Celtic 2, Aberdeen 0; Dundee P, Dunfermline P; Hearts 0, Dundee Utd 1; Kilmarnock 2, St Johnstone 2.

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Division One
Ayr 3, Hibernian 3; Clydebank P, Morton P; St Mirren 3, Hamilton 2; Stranraer P, Falkirk P.

Division Two
Forfar 1, Arbroath 3; Livingston 2, Queen of Sth 0; Partick 0, Clyde 2; Stirling Alb 4, Alloa 2; Inverness CT 4, East Fife 2.

Division Three
Berwick 3, Dumbarton 1; Cowdenbeath P, Ross County P; East Stirling 1, Stenhousemuir 1; Montrose P, Brechin P; Queens Park P, Albion P.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Danish blues

MANCHESTER UNITED crushed Brondby 6-2 in Copenhagen to record their best away win in the European Champions League. Ryan Giggs gave the Reds a second-minute lead and by the half-hour they were three ahead. Although the Danes pulled one back, it was just a lull in United's demonstration of speed, accuracy and hunger for goals.

The pattern continued in the second-half, when three goals inside eight minutes destroyed Brondby's defence although, once again, the Danes managed to snatch one back. Five United players put their names on the score sheet — Giggs twice, Andy Cole, Roy Keane, Dwight Yorke and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

To complete a perfect night for United, Bayern Munich defeated Barcelona 1-0 to send Alex Ferguson's team to the top of Group D at the halfway stage of the qualifying campaign.

The match between Arsenal and Dynamo Kiev ended in a 1-1 draw at Wembley, Dennis Bergkamp netting for the Gunners. However, the London club remain top of Group E.

In the Uefa Cup second round, first leg, Julian Joachim ensured Aston Villa head into the home leg with confidence after a 1-0 victory over Celta Vigo. He scored the valuable away goal after 15 minutes by squeezing the ball under the keeper. The Spanish side tried desperately to equalise, but the Premiership leaders fought off the challenge.

Liverpool face a tough second leg in Spain after failing to break the deadlock against Valencia on home territory. Michael Owen was left on the bench after scoring just two goals in his last 11 appearances, and the Merseysiders were unable to make the most of their chances. Valencia had their moments on the counter-attack but failed to turn them into goals.

Leeds, without a manager, a goal down, their keeper injured trying to make a save, and reduced to 10 men for most of the second-half, returned home from Italy with only a 1-0 deficit against AS Roma. They were under siege for the last 35 minutes after Bruno Ribeiro was sent off, with even Roma's goalkeeper making the occasional foray into their half, but Leeds defended resolutely to deny the Italians.

Celtic were another side to battle with 10 men. Pitched against FC Zurich at Parkhead, they went ahead courtesy of Harald Brattbakk's 22nd minute volley. But after skipper Tommy Boyd was sent off in the last minute of the first half, the Scottish side found themselves under pressure, and could not hold out as Zurich stole an equaliser.

Rangers produced one of their best performances in the competition to beat Bayer Leverkusen 2-1, the visitors' goals coming from Giovanni Van Bronckhorst right on half-time and from Jonatan Johansson in the 63rd minute. Chelsea, holders of the Cup Winners' Cup, seemed set to lose their unbeaten home record after FC Copenhagen went ahead. Gianluca Vialli's players poured forward in search of an equaliser, but it was not until three minutes into injury time that Marcel Desailly saved the home side's blushes with a superb curler. It was a frustrating night for Chelsea, who had more than 20 attempts on target and hit the post twice.

CHRIS SMITH, the Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, is pressing for BSkyB's proposed $1 billion takeover of Manchester United to be referred to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission. Pressure is also expected to come from the Sports Minister, Tony Banks. Peter Mandelson, President of the Board of Trade, is due to receive a report from the Office of Fair Trading next week on whether the deal should be referred. He has the power to overrule the OFT's advice, but it is believed that the pressure inside the Labour party is so great that a full inquiry is inevitable.

PAOLO DI CANIO, Sheffield Wednesday's Italian player with a volcanic temper, was suspended for 11 games and fined $17,000 by a Football Association disciplinary panel for pushing referee Paul Alcock to the ground, seconds after the official had sent him off for fighting with the Arsenal defender Martin Keown during a Premiership clash at Hillsborough on September 26. During the hearing, the 30-year-old Italian admitted the incident had "brought shame" upon him. Di Canio was banned for eight games for his lunge at Alcock and suspended for three for the dismissal itself. The ban is one of the heaviest imposed by the English football authorities and keeps Di Canio out until Boxing Day, when Leicester City visit Hillsborough.



Paolo Di Canio: 11-match ban

SIX footballers were injured when lightning struck during a televised South African Premier League match between Moroka Swallows and Jomo Cosmos in Johannesburg. They were carried off and treated for shock and irregular heartbeats. The match was abandoned.

A SUSTAINED exhibition of excellence on a major stage brought England's rising snooker star Stephen Lee a 9-2 victory over Marco Fu of Hong Kong in the Grand Prix at Preston. Lee pocketed $100,000 for his troubles while Fu had to settle for just over half of that.

AUSTRALIAN motorcyclist Michael Doohan completed his 500cc World Championship winning season with victory in the Argentine Grand Prix in Buenos Aires — his third consecutive triumph on the track. Taduyuki Okada of Japan was second, while third place went to Brazil's Alex Barros.

